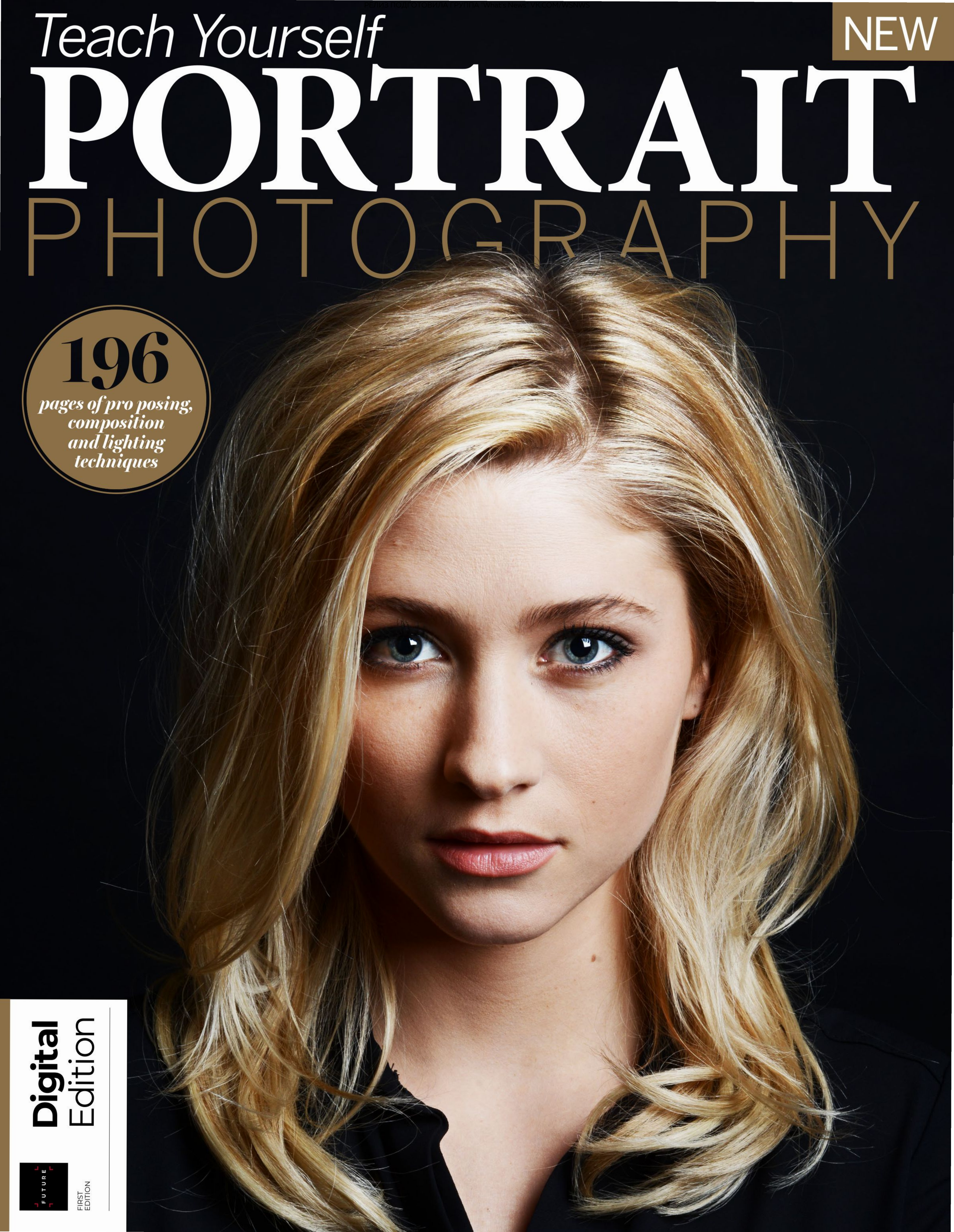
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NEW

Teach Yourself PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY

196

pages of pro posing, composition and lighting techniques



Digital Edition

FUTURE

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Teach Yourself PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY

Often the most memorable pictures are those of people. Portraits can be engaging, emotional, intimate and informative. They are the ultimate story-telling device and enable you to study the human form in great detail. They allow you to celebrate the most intimate details of a person and admire not only their beauty, but their imperfections too.

People pictures surround us everywhere nowadays, from our social media profile pictures to the numerous selfies we take with our phones, however, serious portrait photography is on a whole other level. Teach Yourself Portrait Photography covers everything you need to know to begin your journey towards professional looking imagery. Discover the essential kit that you need as well as expert tips and advice. Master the art of posing and learn to shape the light, as well as how to work in varying environments for compelling and engaging images of people. Use your subject to tell a story, utilise their emotions or mould them creatively for captivating and artistic results. Work your way through the in-depth features and follow the step-by-step tutorials in order to take your portrait photography up a notch or two.

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Portrait Photographer's Buyer's Guide

A guide to the best bodies, lenses and must-have equipment.

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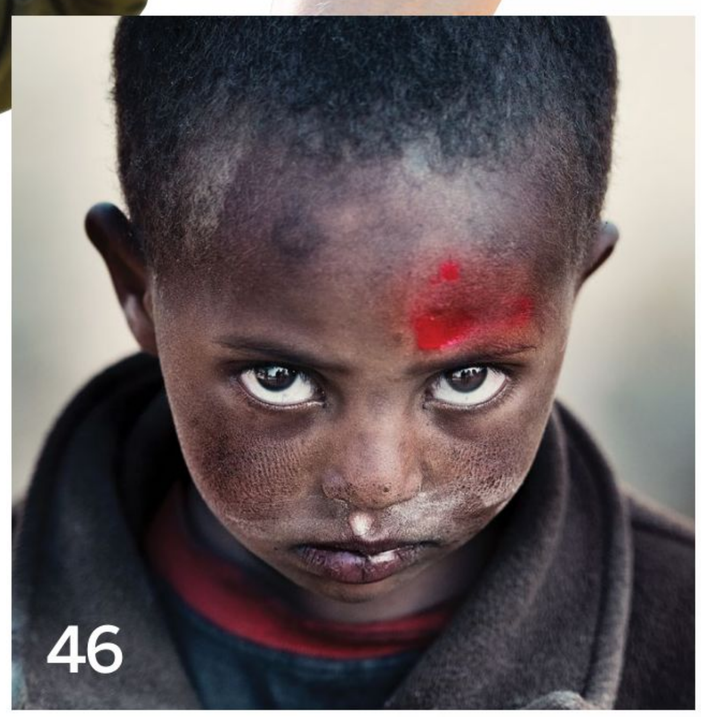
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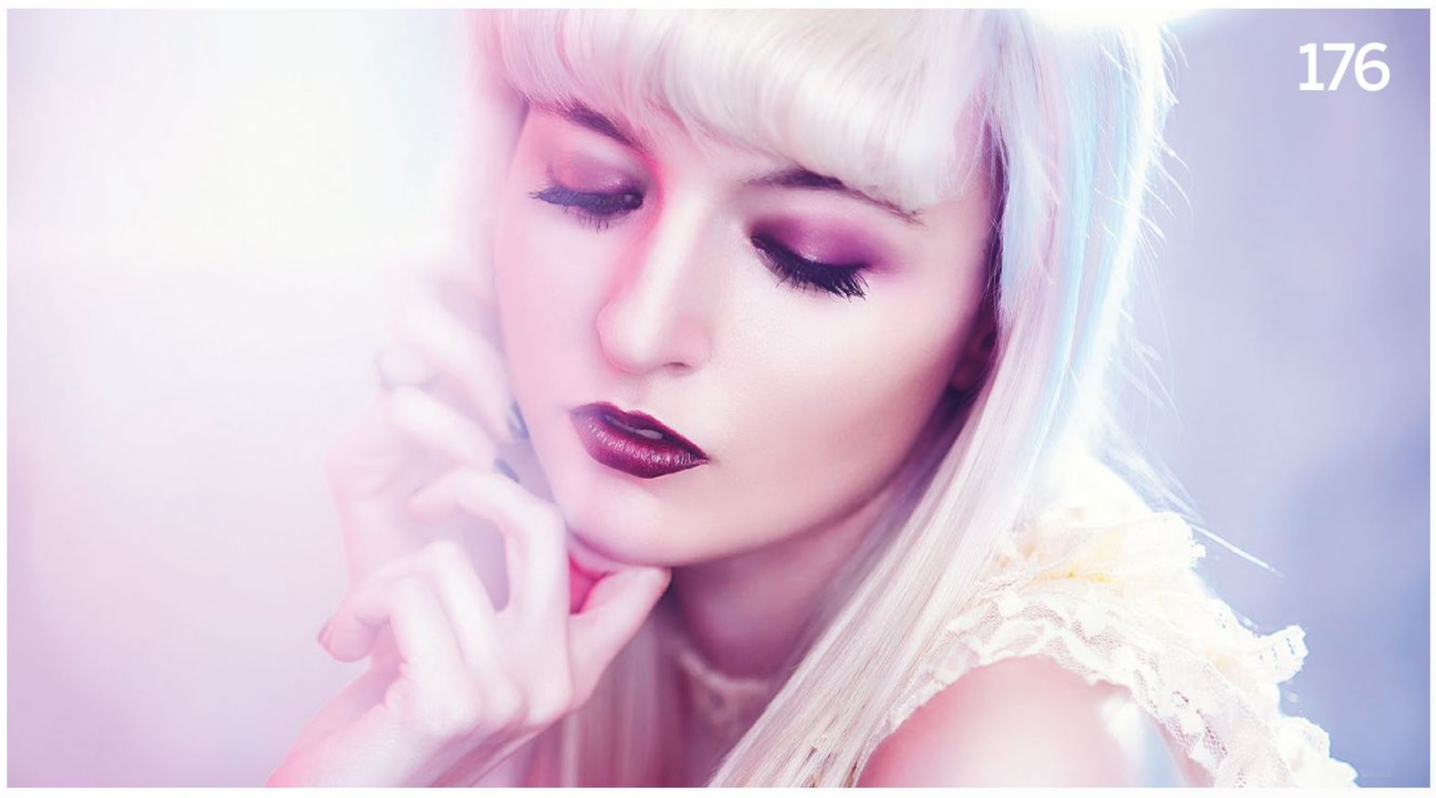
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PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHER'S BUYER'S GUIDE

Here's our guide to the best bodies, lenses and must-have equipment for shooting perfect portraits

If you ask someone to tell you the most stunning photograph they've ever seen, more often than not they will recall a picture of a person: a Hollywood headshot of James Dean or Marilyn Monroe; a harrowing war photograph like Shell-shocked US Marine or The Battle of Hue by Don McCullin; a historic figure like Albert Einstein with his tongue out, or Che Guevara adorning a generation of t-shirts.

To many people, powerful portraiture is the clearest crystallisation of the potential of photography. You don't have to aim for these kinds of immortalising images though; shooting portraits can be one of the most enjoyable and sociable ways to put your camera to use – and of course, if you shoot for a living, one of the most profitable, too!

Whether you're an eager enthusiast or a practising professional, putting together the perfect portrait setup will help you get great shots of family, friends, colleagues and clients. In this guide we'll run down the best bodies, from small but mighty micro four-thirds to medium-format monsters, as well as some great glass that will make your subject – and photographs – look their best.

When you're ready to take your portraiture to the next level, add to your arsenal with our look at the essential extras to up your game, from lighting equipment and calibration tools to tripods and tethering kit. Just remember that there are no shortcuts to good portraits. It's no good having all the gear if you've got no idea!



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PICKING THE BEST BODY

Beauty is in the eye – and camera body – of the beholder

It's comforting to know that in this day and age, you really can't buy a bad camera. Even an entry-level system will deliver good results, meaning that virtually any body (and, indeed, anybody) can get an image worth framing.

At the same time, there are a number that seem tailor-made for specific situations. Just as there are dedicated action cameras, there are cameras that are right at home in a studio or on a portrait sitting.

If you shoot with supplemental lighting, for instance, you can choose a camera that prioritises image quality over dynamic range or ISO performance. Perhaps you prefer shooting on a tripod, making a heavier camera much more practical than if you were shooting handheld. Or maybe you want a mirrorless body that's small and light, enabling you to be more freewheeling.

Do you want the highest resolution for your prints, matching the medium-format masters of old, or is a cropped sensor fine for your purposes? And what if you want to take your camera out of the studio and into the street, or even the wind or rain, to get a completely different mood for your shots?

With all these factors taken into consideration, here are the best cameras you can choose for shooting portraits.

CANON EOS 5DS R

Canon's premium-grade DSLR features a medium format megapixel count



"R" is for resolution
The 5DS R delivers medium format megapixels and super sharp image quality, but it's not a general purpose camera

Technical specs

Price:	£2,729.99
Web:	canon.co.uk
Megapixels (effective):	50.6
Max resolution (pixels):	8688 x 5792
Sensor information:	Full frame CMOS
Shutter speed:	1/8000 - 30s
ISO sensitivity:	100 - 6,400 (expandable to 50 - 12,800)
Lens data/Zoom:	Canon EF mount
Exposure modes:	Auto, Manual, Aperture value, Time Value, Program mode
Metering options:	Multi, Centre-weighted, Spot, Partial
Flash modes:	E-TTL II auto flash, Metered manual
Connectivity:	USB, HDMI (Type C), microphone jack
Weight:	845g body / 930g with battery
Dimensions:	152 x 116.4 x 76.4mm
Batteries:	LP-E6N / LP-E6 lithium-ion battery
Storage:	CompactFlash, SD
LCD:	1,040K dots, 3.2"
Viewfinder:	Pentaprism, 100% coverage, 0.71x magnification

Summary

If you want to print at A0 with gin-clear clarity, the 5DS R is hard to beat. Just don't expect it to be much use for anything outside the studio.



Where the Canon EOS 5D Mark IV is the company's all-purpose body, the 5DS R is its all-performance body. It boasts a staggering 50.6MP sensor, making it a top-tier option for studio shooting. However, to achieve this resolution it sacrifices a number of other specs – namely ISO, video and continuous shooting speed – that make it unsuitable for general-practice photography.

Make no mistake, the 5DS R was designed specifically for tightly controlled studio shooting, right down to the low pass cancellation filter that offers extra sharpness at the risk of moiré (its sister model, the 5DS, omits this filter). Just bear in mind that your camera craft needs to be similarly top-notch, as this resolution will betray even the tiniest errors in focus or camera shake!

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The best DSLR?
With killer specs and performance, the Nikon D850 has earned a reputation as the best DSLR on the market

NIKON D850

Speed + resolution = the ultimate DSLR for professional photographers?

Where the Canon 5DS R sacrifices all other values in pursuit of its mammoth megapixel count, the Nikon D850 delivers sky-high resolution, as well as rock-solid specs that make it a jack of all trades, and master of almost all of them.

It clocks in at a few MP less than the Canon, but takes a similar tack in abolishing the anti-aliasing filter to deliver pin-sharp detail at the risk of moiré. So again, your skills need to be sharp, but you will be rewarded with a camera that can do virtually everything both in the studio and out – so unlike the 5DS R, this will serve you equally well if you want to shoot 4K video or sports (though its buffer is a little limited).

Technical specs

Price:	£3,299
Web:	nikon.co.uk
Megapixels (effective):	45.7
Max resolution (pixels):	8256 x 5504
Sensor information:	Full frame CMOS
Shutter speed:	1/8,000 - 30s
ISO sensitivity:	64 - 25,600 (expandable to 32 - 102,400)
Lens data/Zoom:	Nikon F mount
Exposure modes:	Auto, Manual, Flexible program, Shutter priority auto, Aperture priority auto
Metering options:	Matrix, Centre-weighted, Spot, Highlight-weighted
Flash modes:	i-TTL
Connectivity:	Wi-Fi, USB, HDMI (Type C), microphone jack, headphone jack, Bluetooth
Weight:	915g body / 1,005g with battery and XQD card
Dimensions:	146 x 124 x 78.5 mm
Batteries:	EN-EL15a lithium-ion battery
Storage:	XQD, SD (supports UHS-II)
LCD:	Tilting touchscreen, 2,359k dots, 3.2"
Viewfinder:	Pentaprism, 100% coverage, 0.75x magnification

Summary

There's a reason that this is the tool of choice for so many professional photographers: Nikon's worthy workhorse can do just about anything you could ask of a camera.

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Small but mighty
A pioneer of mirrorless cameras, Olympus' flagship body is small, sharp, speedy and stabilised – ideal for pros and enthusiasts alike.

OLYMPUS OM-D E-M1 MARK II

The micro four-thirds mirrorless miracle – it's not big, but it is clever

Tired of lugging around hulking bodies and lenses? Sick of spending almost three or four grand on a new body? Fancy a lightweight, compact system that doesn't compromise on image quality? Then consider Olympus' flagship, professional-grade OM-D E-M1 Mark II.

The micro four-thirds sensor (a 2x crop from 35mm equivalents) means that not only is the body smaller and lighter, but crucially so are the lenses (solving the problem faced by full-frame mirrorless cameras where the bodies are smaller but the lenses are the same size, making them unbalanced).

While its native files are smaller, the E-M1 Mark II boasts a 50 megapixel Hi Res Shot mode that's ideal for static subjects. Along with five-axis in-body image stabilisation and weather sealing, it's capable of 60fps RAW burst shooting and features the fantastic Pro Capture (that records 35 frames before you even press the shutter), making this is a formidable camera.

SOMETHING FOR EVERY BODY

From APS-C to medium format, here are some other seriously capable systems

Fujifilm X-T3



Fuji's latest X series model may offer the best bang-to-buck ratio on the market. Its 26.1MP APS-C (1.5x crop) sensor delivers images that punch well above its weight, and the £1,349 price tag makes up for the lack of IBIS.

Nikon Z7



In many respects, the £3,399 Z7 is a mirrorless D850 with improvements. It has IBIS, a newer processor, more focus points and faster burst. Crucially, it only has one memory card slot, making it less appealing for professional use.

Hasselblad X1D-50c



Its £7,788 retail price may be eye-watering, but its 50MP medium format sensor offers almost unparalleled image quality. The pace of shooting can be molasses-slow, but the beautiful files and depth of rendering are worth the wait (if not the price).

Canon EOS 5D Mark IV



It doesn't pack as many megapixels as the 5DS R, but the Mark IV is just at home in challenging ISO conditions or shooting street photography as it is in the studio. At £3,249, though, the higher-spec D850 might be more appealing.

Phase One XF IQ4



Digital medium format cameras aren't all created equal! The Hasselblad has a 'small' medium format sensor, while the Phase One boasts a true 645-equivalent with a whopping 150 megapixels. It also sells for a whopping £42,600, but it's undoubtedly the gold standard of imaging.

Technical specs

Price:	£1,499.99
Web:	olympus.co.uk
Megapixels (effective):	20.4
Max resolution (pixels):	5184 x 3888 (10,368 x 7,776 Hi Res Shot)
Sensor information:	4/3'' Live MOS sensor
Shutter speed:	1/8,000 - 60s
ISO sensitivity:	Low (100) - 25,600
Lens data/Zoom:	Micro four-thirds mount
Exposure modes:	Auto, Manual, Aperture priority, Shutter priority, Programme automatic
Metering options:	ESP, Centre-weighted, Spot, Highlight, Shadow
Flash modes:	TTL Auto, Auto, Manual, FP TTL Auto, FP Manual
Connectivity:	Wi-Fi, USB, HDMI (Type D), microphone jack, headphone jack
Weight:	498g body / 574g with battery and memory card
Dimensions:	134.1 x 90.9 x 68.9mm
Batteries:	BLH-1 lithium-ion Battery
Storage:	2x SD card (Slot1 supports UHS-II)
LCD:	Articulating touchscreen, 1,037K dots, 3" (3:2)
Viewfinder:	EVF, 2.360K dots, 100% coverage, 1.48x maximum magnification

Summary

A portable portrait powerhouse with lightweight body and lenses. The smaller sensor sacrifices resolution and depth of field, but certainly doesn't compromise quality. A cruiserweight frame with a heavyweight punch.

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SONY A7R III

Alpha by name, alpha by nature, combining mirrorless tech with DSLR performance

While Canon and Nikon made a lot of noise about their recently released full-frame mirrorless cameras, the big boys are playing catch-up to Sony's five-year head start with the technology.

The A7R III is the reigning champion of full-fat mirrorless systems, delivering a huge sensor, compact form factor, in-body image stabilisation and razor-sharp resolution, as well as fast burst speeds and enviable 4K video capability. The half-decade that Sony has spent building up its format means there's now a great selection of lenses too, and these are the reasons why so many Canon and Nikon photographers have sold all their kit and switched systems.

It may lack Canon's famed colour science and the battery life might not be the best, but there is simply nothing that this camera cannot do. And like the Olympus, the fantastic electronic viewfinder will likely change the way you shoot.

Technical specs

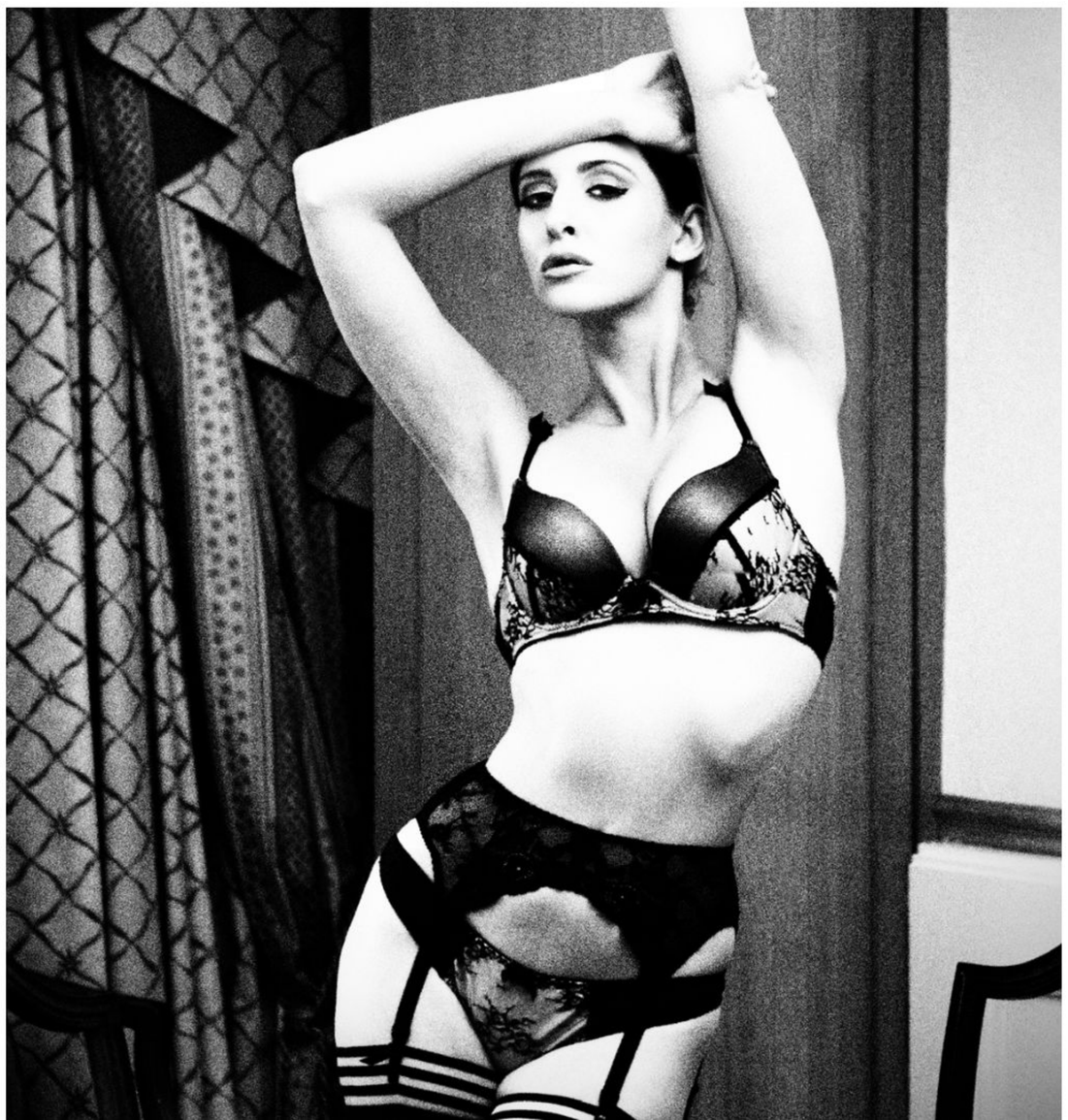
Price:	£2,899
Web:	sony.co.uk
Megapixels (effective):	42.4
Max resolution (pixels):	7952 x 5304
Sensor information:	Full-frame CMOS
Shutter speed:	1/8,000 - 30s
ISO sensitivity:	100 - 32,000 (expandable to 50 - 102,400)
Lens data/Zoom:	Sony E-mount
Exposure modes:	Auto, Manual, Programmed AE, Aperture priority, Shutter speed priority
Metering options:	Multi-segment, Centre-weighted, Spot, Spot Standard/Large, Entire Screen Avg, Highlight
Flash modes:	Pre-flash TTL
Connectivity:	Wi-Fi, USB, HDMI (Type D), NFC, Bluetooth, NFC, headphone jack, microphone jack
Weight:	657g with battery and memory card
Dimensions:	126.9 x 95.6 x 73.7mm
Batteries:	NP-FZ100 lithium-ion battery
Storage:	2x SD (Slot1 supports UHS-II) (Slot2 supports Memory Stick Duo)
LCD:	Tilting touchscreen, 1,440K dots, 3"
Viewfinder:	EVF, 3.686K dots, 100% coverage, 0.78x magnification

Summary

Nikon is catching up, but the A7R III is arguably the only pro-grade full-frame mirrorless camera on the market. The image stabilisation and EVF alone make it hard to beat.

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17mm: Wide-angle

Taking portraits with a wide-angle lens results in severe distortion to the subject. Shooting at 17mm produces a very extreme result; used consciously it can be used to creative effect, but used unaware it will produce severe side effects.



50mm: Nifty fifty

Generally speaking, 50mm is as wide as portraits should be taken. Combined with the f1.8 aperture, the background begins to blur and create subject separation. However, composing tighter on the head will distort the facial features.



85mm: Versatile

At 85mm, the ingredients of a great portrait start to come together. Again the f1.8 aperture blurs the background, the effect of which is more pronounced at this length. Facial distortion when composing tighter is reduced.





135mm: Classic

The ingredients coalesce at 135mm, the classic portrait focal length. Aperture and compression of perspective blur the background, "squishing" it closer to the mid and foreground to flatter the facial features even when composed tightly on the head.

GOING TO GREAT LENGTHS

Choosing the right focal length is the key to creating classic portraits

Photography is all about picking the right tool for the job. You wouldn't shoot a landscape with a macro lens, after all; selecting a lens with the right focal length and the right characteristics for your subject, setting and situation will make the difference between a nice snap for Facebook and a powerful portrait that you'd want to put on the wall.

When most people begin their photographic journey, they start with a zoom lens (usually the lens that comes with their camera). Taking the plunge into the world of prime lenses is key to getting images with the best quality, but it can be daunting. Primes are expensive and have a fixed focal length, making them less appealing.

From sharpness and depth of field to low-light performance and compression of perspective, primes lenses are key to perfecting your portraiture. Let's take a look at the most popular focal lengths, how they affect your portraits and some of the best examples of lenses...

1

#nofilter

You don't need UV or ND filters for portraits, and they will only degrade the quality of your images

2

Aperture

Apertures of f1.8, 1.4 and 1.2 enable you to take full creative control of your depth of field

3

Stabilisation

For longer lenses, especially on bodies without stabilisation, this can make the difference between shaky and sharp

4

Cut the crop

With APS-C or micro four-thirds lenses, remember the crop factor when choosing focal length!



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CANON EF 50MM F1.8 STM

The nifty fifty – the portrait prime gateway drug

We've established that many photographers can be put off by both the price and fixed focal length of prime lenses, and limiting yourself to zoom lenses will hold back your portraiture more than any genre besides macro. With so many primes to choose from though, where do you start?

Enter the 'nifty fifty'. A focal length that resembles the human eye's field of view, it's very natural to shoot with, making it an ideal all-purpose optic rather than just a portrait lens. The best thing is the price; both Canon and Nikon make a 'plastic fantastic' f1.8 version that's cheap as chips and offers very good performance.

A 50mm lens is about as wide as you'd want to go for portraits, and is best suited for full- and waist-length shots; any tighter than that, and you will start to distort your subject's features.



Technical specs

Price:	£119.99	**Min aperture:**	22
Manufacturer:	Canon		Min focus
Model:	EF 50mm f1.8 STM	**distance:**	0.45m
Web:	canon.co.uk	**Mount:**	Canon EF
	Elements/construction: 6/5	**Filter size:**	49mm
Angle of view:	40°, 27°,46°	**Length:**	39.3mm
Max aperture:	1.8	**Diameter:**	69.2mm
		Weight:	159g

TAMRON SP 85MM F1.8 DI VC USD

A classic focal length and versatile portrait performer

An 85mm lens is the most popular focal length for shooting portraits, both because of the results produced and the practicalities of using it. The Tamron SP 85mm f1.8 Di VC USD is a great example, offering superb sharpness and contrast, beautiful bokeh and optical image stabilisation. It's available for Canon, Nikon and Sony full-frame mounts.

This lens is ideal for full-length images right through to head-and-shoulder shots, making it a highly versatile portrait prime. The focal length will compress and blur an outdoor background far more than a 50mm lens is capable of, but with a working distance that means you can still use it indoors.

On cropped sensor bodies, APS-C users should look at 50mm lenses while micro four-thirds users will need a lens around 45mm to get an equivalent focal length.



Technical specs

Price:	£799.99	**Min aperture:**	16Min focus
Manufacturer:	Tamron		distance: 0.8m
Model:	SP 85mm f1.8 Di VC USD	**Mount:**	Canon EF / Nikon FX/Sony A
Web:	tamron.eu	**Filter size:**	67mm
	Elements/construction: 13/9	**Length:**	91.3mm
Angle of view:	28°33' - 18°39'	**Diameter:**	84.8mm
Max aperture:	1.8	**Weight:**	700g

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OLYMPUS M.ZUIKO DIGITAL ED 75MM 1:1.8

A razor-sharp 150mm equivalent for micro four-thirds cameras

The most discerning portrait photographers opt for a focal length in the 135mm to 150mm range, whose lenses have produced so many iconic headshots and impactful images throughout the years. The longer length renders backgrounds as a bokehlicious blur, and enables you to frame faces tightly without causing the distortion seen in shorter lenses. Indeed, a key characteristic of this focal length is compression of perspective; this compacts the fore, mid and background, and has the effect of "making noses shorter" – ideal for flattering your subjects. However, the working distance means that full-length shots will probably be limited to location shoots.

The Olympus 75mm f1.8 – which equates to 150mm thanks to micro four-thirds' 2x crop – is an absolutely stellar lens; so sharp that you'll be cutting yourself on cheekbones, it also gives Olympus and Panasonic users the kind of separation that full-frame users take for granted.

Technical specs

Price:	£849.99	**Min aperture:**	22
Manufacturer:	Olympus	**Min focus distance:**	0.9m
Model:	M.Zuiko Digital ED 75mm 1:1.8	**Mount:**	Micro four-thirds
Web:	olympus.co.uk	**Filter size:**	58mm
	Elements/construction: 10/9	**Length:**	69mm
Angle of view:	16°	**Diameter:**	64mm
Max aperture:	1.8	**Weight:**	305g

NIKKOR AF-S 70-200MM F2.8E FL ED VR

Using a zoom needn't be all doom and gloom

If you're serious about portraits, nothing can beat using a dedicated prime lens. However, if you absolutely can't live without the convenience of a zoom, upgrading your variable aperture kit lens to higher grade optic will still enable your camera to resolve your images to a superior standard.

A 70-200mm lens encompasses the key 85mm and 135-150mm focal lengths, making it a tempting proposition. Each system has its own equivalent of this lens, with the Nikon AF-S 70-200mm f2.8E FL ED VR being a great example of what it can deliver.

The constant f2.8 aperture means that, while it can't create the same depth of field as a dedicated f1.8 prime, the f-stop won't change as you zoom in and out, making it easier to change your composition on the fly. The top-grade glass, meanwhile, ensures sharpness across the frame and across the range.

Technical specs

Price:	£2,849	**Max aperture:**	2.8
Manufacturer:	Nikon	**Min aperture:**	22
Model:	Nikkor AF-S 70-200mm f2.8E FL ED VR	**Min focus distance:**	1.1m
		Mount:	Nikon FX
Web:	nikon.co.uk	**Filter size:**	77mm
	Elements/construction: 22/18	**Length:**	202.5mm
		Diameter:	88.5mm
Angle of view:	34°20' - 12°20'	**Weight:**	1,430g

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PORTRAIT ESSENTIALS

Must-have equipment and accessories that every portrait photographer should own

You've got the perfect camera to suit your shooting style, and chosen the lens that enables you to take the picture that's in your head. However, there's a difference between just taking a picture and truly making a picture.

With a camera and lens, a picture taker has everything they need. A picture maker, though, will make use of tools such as lights, modifiers, reflectors and gels. Light is the raw material of photography, so the ability to control it is crucial to create great pictures – and nowhere is this more true than with portraiture.

It doesn't matter what light you use – a speed light, continuous, studio, angle-poise; adding supplemental lighting will let you create shape, texture and form. This is achieved using modifiers like umbrellas, softboxes, snoots and beauty dishes to manipulate the light source.

In addition, there are some important pieces of kit that you should keep in your bag or in the studio whenever you shoot, whether it's a meter to measure the light, instruments to calibrate your screen and lenses, or even a roll of tape to secure a backdrop or fix a loose fitting in case of an emergency.

But before you proceed to ask someone to sit down for your next portrait session, read through our list of essential extras in order to make sure you have everything you need should you get down to it!



ELINCHROM ELB 400

A powerful portable flash unit that's ideal for shooting on location and in the studio

There are a number of great options for supplemental illumination. Profoto's B10 is a formidable flash unit, the Rotolight NEO 2 offers fantastic continuous LED light, and if you want a speed light (or just a cheap way to experiment with flash) then you can't go wrong with the Yongnuo YN560 IV.

For our money, though, the Elinchrom ELB 400 offers the best bang for your lighting buck. Packing enough punch to overpower the sun, this battery-powered kit includes everything you need to produce powerful flash in the studio or on location.

Technical specs

Price:	£1,099
Power output:	7 to 424W
Lamp:	50W modelling (continuous)
Power flashes per charge:	350
Charge time:	1h 30m
Weight:	280g (head)

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Technical specs

Price:	£169
Size:	100cm x 100cm
Weight:	263g

ELINCHROM ROTALUX SQUAREBOX 100CM SOFTBOX

Diffuse your light with a high-quality softbox that folds down just like an umbrella

There are so many modifiers that portrait photographers can use to control light. A beauty dish creates classic, luscious lighting that's ideal for portraiture – but it's big and inconvenient to transport, and isn't as versatile as other options. A snoot is a conical modifier that constrains light, giving directional illumination that's perfect for creative effect, but again its application is quite specific.

A softbox is arguably the most useful general-purpose lighting modifier. By adding grids and diffusers you can control the direction and spread, and this Rotalux Squarebox folds like an umbrella for easy storage and transport.



Technical specs

Price:	£79.95
Weight:	7 to 424W
Max payload:	1,500g
Attachment:	1/4Ð screw, 3/8Ð screw, 5/8Ð (16mm) stud
Min height:	49cm
Max height:	195cm

MANFROTTO NANOPOLE STAND

A lightweight light stand that quickly converts to a boom arm for additional versatility

Lights and modifiers are little use without light stands! Choosing the right stand for your equipment is almost as important as choosing the lights themselves. For heavier heads and studio lights, you may need heavyweight stands, boom arms and sandbags to ensure that your kit is safe and secure.

For more lightweight heads and speed lights, however, one of the best stands we've ever used is the Manfrotto Nanopole. This lightweight, compact stand is good for studio and location shoots, and at the click of a button becomes a polearm that can be used to boom and direct your light.



3 LEGGED THING WINSTON TRIPOD & AIRHED 360 HEAD

A rigid, robust and rock-solid tripod that will handle any camera you put on it

A tripod isn't always a necessity for portraits. Most bodies can be easily handheld for the duration of shoots, especially when flash is introduced to help arrest motion. However, there are both bodies and situations where a tripod is useful.

If you're using a heavier system, like a medium-format Phase One, having a tripod for support becomes more important – particularly using longer lenses without any stabilisation. When shooting a series of sitting portraits, such as corporate headshots or school pictures, having consistent framing is also beneficial. In both cases, a ball head is important to enable quick adjustment.

Technical specs

Price:	£404.99
Weight:	1.75kg
Max payload:	40kg
Min height:	170mm
Max height:	1,850mm

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DATACOLOR SPYDER5 CAPTURE PRO £249

A one-stop solution for calibrating your camera, lenses and display for post-production

It's the first thing that everyone should do when they take a new camera, a new lens or a new monitor out of the box. Invariably, however, it's the last thing that anyone does – and it only tends to happen long after you realise your lenses are back-focusing or your screen is displaying the wrong colours.

The Spyder5 Capture Pro kit enables you to calibrate every step of your capturing process. If nothing else, the Spyder5 screen colorimeter should be used every few months to make sure that your monitor shows you what your pictures actually look like!

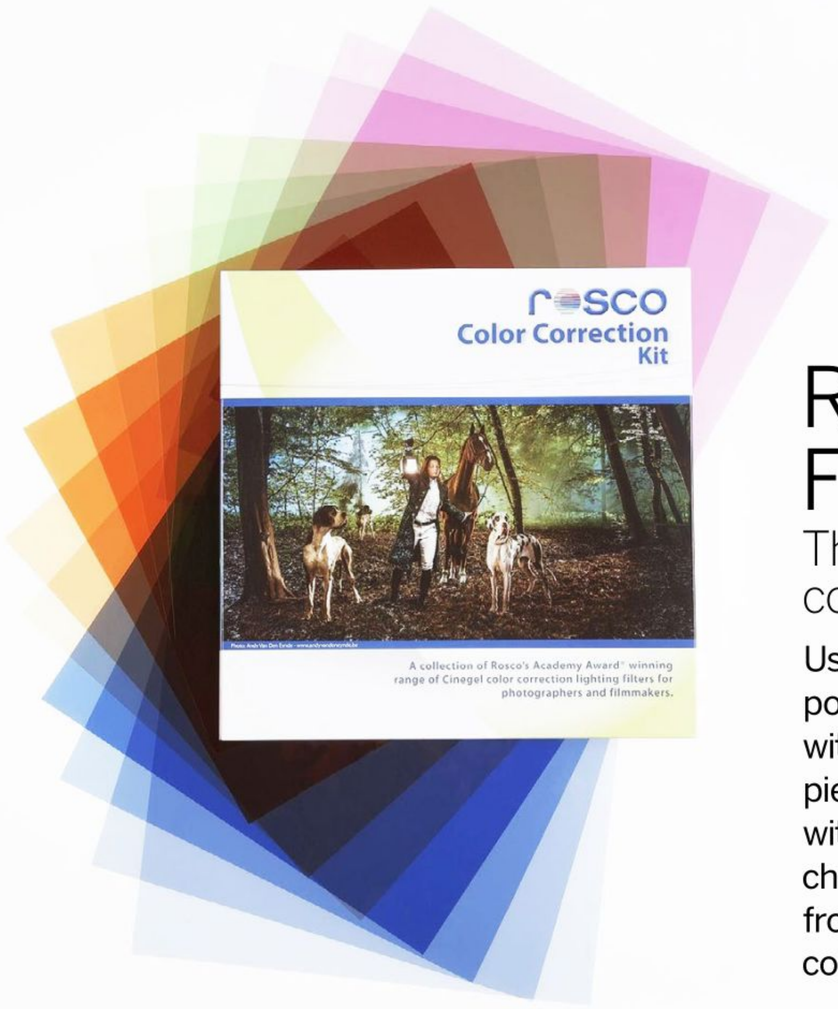
SEKONIC L-308X FLASHMATE £215

Don't trust your camera meter – you need a handheld, independent light meter for accurate exposures!

Why buy a light meter when your camera has one built-in? A light meter takes an incident reading, which measures the light that actually hits your subject. Your camera meter takes a reflected reading, which measures the light that bounces off your subject.

Your camera meter compounds this by telling you to expose your pictures at 18 per cent grey. Snap a black cat in a coal shed or white dog in the snow, and your camera will over or underexpose. Use a light meter to take an empirical reading of the light to get perfect exposures every time.

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ROSCO COLOR CORRECTION FILTER KIT £24.48

There's more to gels than Quality Street wrappers – use properly colour-balanced gels for complete control

Using coloured gels can create stunning portraits. A classic portrait can be embellished with a flourish of subtle colour, or a vibrant piece of graphic expression can be achieved with more audacious use. However, using cheap gels from eBay or pieces of coloured film from craft shops won't give you the full creative control that gels were created for.

Rosco produces properly colour-balanced gels including CTB (colour temperature orange) to boost the temperature of tungsten sources, and CTO (colour temperature orange) to warm up daylight-balanced sources like strobes, HMIs or LEDs. Cheap gels and Quality Street wrappers won't do that!

LASTOLITE COLLAPSIBLE REFLECTOR 1.2M £84.95

Use a reflector to work with natural daylight or the existing ambient illumination

The best way to illuminate your portraits is with supplemental lighting. Sometimes, however, it may not be possible to set up a light and stand. It may be too windy, there may not be a socket, flash may not be permitted, or you may not have any lights.

A reflector enables you to manipulate existing light, whether you're shooting outdoors in the sun or working with windowlight indoors. Lastolite's highly durable reflectors are reinforced, double coated and come with a lifetime rim guarantee, so you know they'll stand the test of time.





GAFFER TAPE £4.49

This miracle tape has saved the day for many a portrait photographer, so make sure you have some!

Ask anyone practical-minded and they will recount a story about how gaffer or duct tape has saved the day with a little creative application. To know why gaffer tape should be in every photographer's kit bag, look no further than the term 'gaffer' – the lighting technician on a film crew, who traditionally used so much of this magical tape that it was effectively named after the position.

From taping down lighting cables to securing backdrops, affixing gels to flash units or even repairing broken light stands and brackets, gaffer tape is an absolute must for any photographer, especially portrait artists.



CROCODILE CLIPS £6.99

Keep everything and anything in place with these handy clips

There's a funny scene in the movie Lost In Translation where Bill Murray, fresh off a photoshoot for a whisky commercial, turns to leave after a conversation with Scarlett Johansson, revealing that his exquisitely fitting tuxedo is actually being pinned in place by bulldog clips.

This is a genuine trick of the trade for fashion and portrait photographers. The skilful use of a few bulldog clips can make an ill-fitting suit look tailor made, or a charity shop wedding dress look custom-made for a bridal shoot. They can also be used to dress a set with fabrics or other materials.

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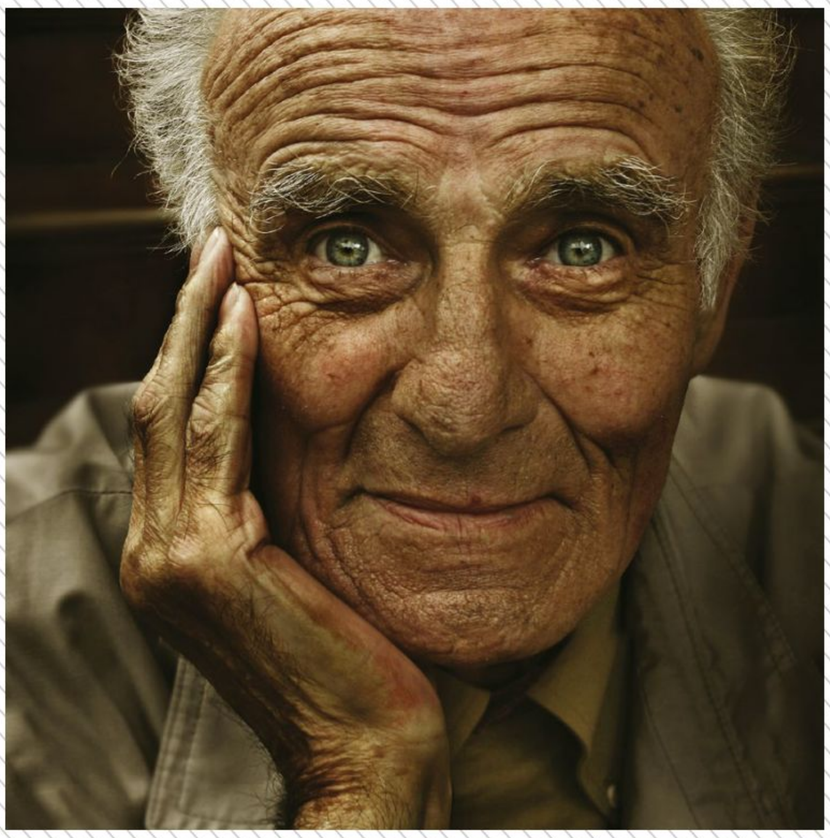
50 PRO PORTRAIT SECRETS

Discover how top professional photographers capture stunning people shots with this compendium of expert advice

Portrait photography has always been incredibly popular. In the mid-19th Century, when photography was still very much in its infancy, capturing images of other people quickly became commonplace. Today, many of those who develop an interest in photography look to portraits as their main focus and many professional photographers earn their living through portrait photography.

Its ubiquity can make it appear as though it's easier than it really is, though. Much skill, patience and practice is required if you are going to take portraits that have plenty of impact and truly have something to say about the subject.

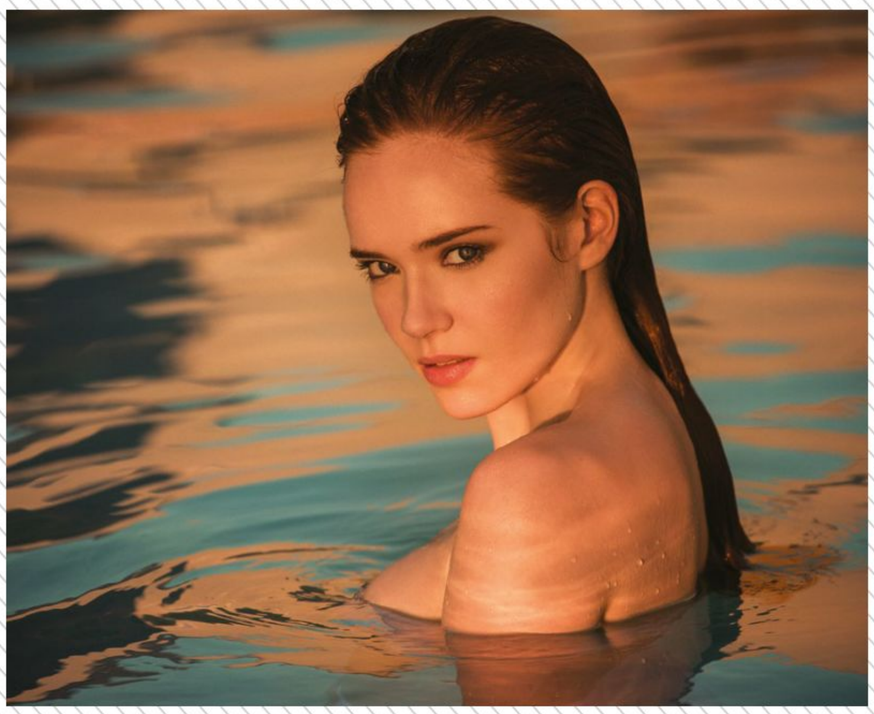
Over the next few pages, you'll discover how experienced, professional portrait photographers approach their work and how they ensure that they capture amazing portraits time and time again. From planning your shoots through to retouching the results, you'll learn the 50 key tips that will help you produce better portraits than ever before.

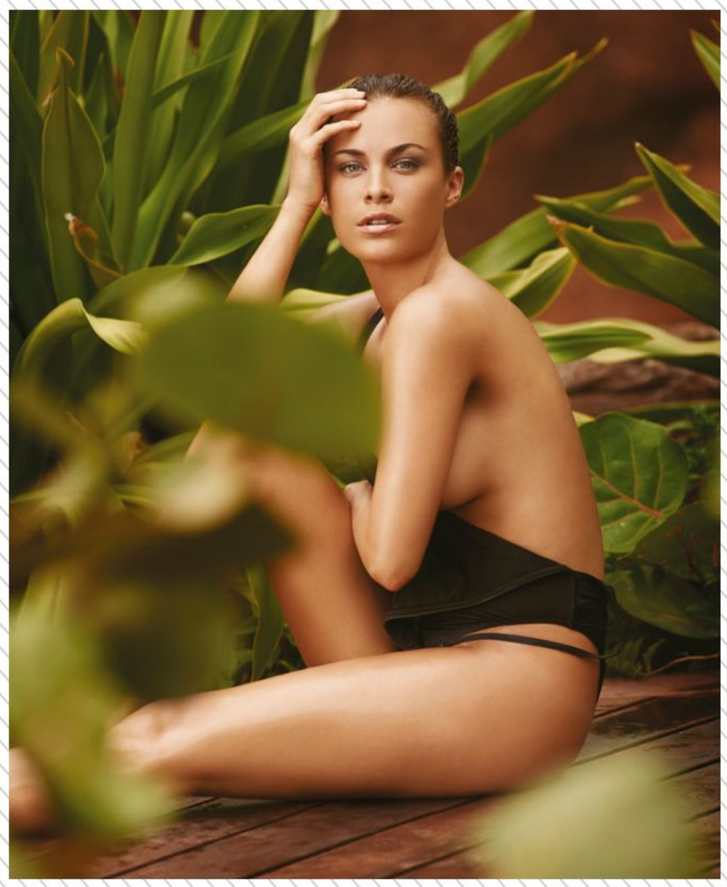








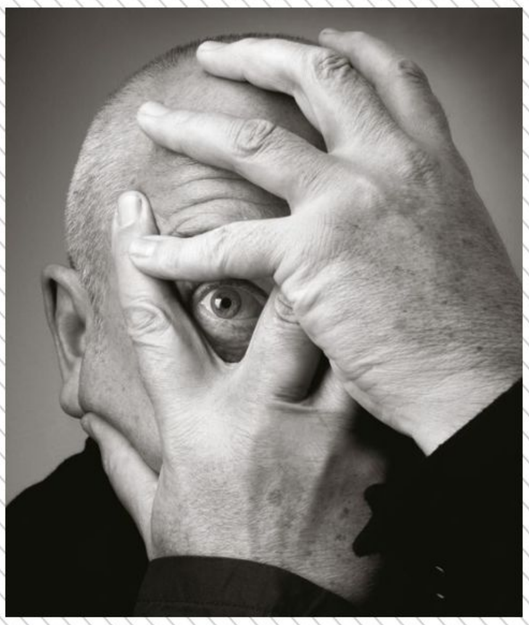




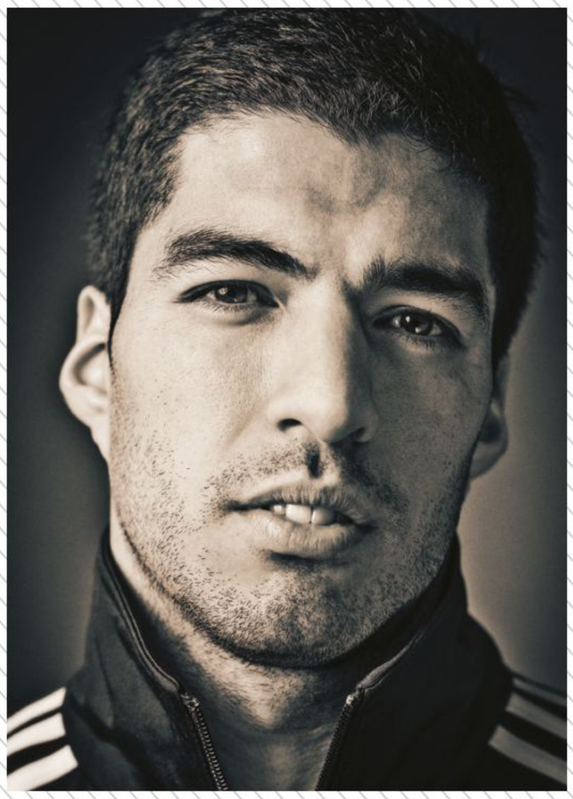












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4

MASTER THE ESSENTIALS

From familiarity with your kit to paying attention to the background, getting the basics right is a vital first step

1 **Know your kit** It is essential that you know your camera and lighting equipment inside out. While shooting a portrait you need to concentrate fully on your subject and not be distracted by any technical issues. Practise setting up and using your kit again and again until it becomes second nature.

2 **Engage with your subject** View any portrait session as a real collaboration between you and your subject. They should be included in every aspect of the process. Explain to them exactly what you are trying to achieve and how you plan on doing it. You will get far more from them if they are fully involved.

3 **Consider the context** Consider carefully why you are taking the portrait and what it will be used for. This should inform the approach you take in the planning and execution of the shoot and often gives a purpose and meaning to the end result.

4 **Create atmospheric images** Think about the atmosphere created in your portrait. When considered carefully, a number of elements in your photograph can be enhanced and manipulated to give your portrait a real atmosphere. Look closely at your lighting, composition, background, tone and colour. These all strongly affect how we view and feel about an image.

5 **Know your lighting** Light can usually be divided into two distinct categories – hard light and soft light. Both types have a dramatically different effect on a portrait, but can be easily created using softboxes, reflectors or direct sources of light. Experiment with manipulating and combining light types.

6 **Experiment with composition** Good composition is the essence of a good portrait. Try shooting from different angles: close up, full length, from above or below – but never pose your subject too rigidly. Put them at ease and allow them to be comfortable.

7 **Avoid background distractions** Choose the background of your shot carefully. Try to avoid distracting backgrounds by throwing them out of focus using a small depth of field. Consider using a plain, neutral backdrop to really emphasise your subject.

MEET THE PRO
JAMES ECKERSLEY



Specialising in portrait and advertising photography, Eckersley has worked with some of the most prestigious clients in the world. His work is held in the permanent collections of both the National Portrait Gallery and The Royal Collection, and his portraits have appeared in numerous publications including *Time Magazine*, *GQ*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Telegraph Magazine*. His published books include *The Last Few*, a collection of portraits and interviews depicting the surviving pilots from the Battle of Britain.

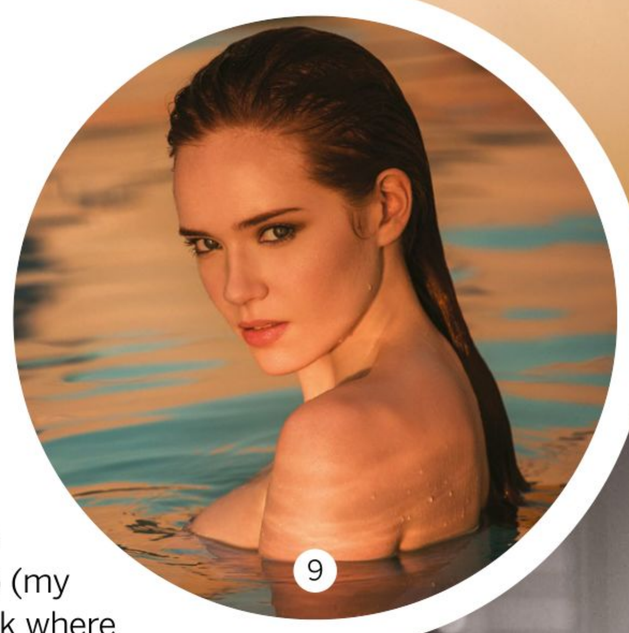
3x © James Eckersley

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CAPTURE FLATTERING BEAUTY


11

Learn how to create stylised portraits


9

8 Balance the colours I love using complementary colours in my work – colours that are across from each other on the colour wheel because it gives it a three-dimensional look.

9 Utilise shallow depth of field This means setting your aperture to f2.8-3.5 (my personal sweet spot) so it creates a look where your subject is tack sharp and the background falls beautifully out of focus. This draws more attention to your subject.

10 Work with beautiful natural light I always try to shoot at the most flattering times of day so I'll start shooting in the early morning and then break for lunch during unflattering midday Sun and then shoot until the Sun sets. If you are stuck shooting midday, always look for shade or create your own shade with a scrim. Subjects look most beautiful during the best lighting!

11 Overexpose skin tones a little I personally overexpose my skin tones by about 1/3 to 1/2 a stop and the reason is that it tends to make your subjects skin more glowy and beautiful and in return, less retouching needed. So you don't have to go by exactly what your meter says, go by what looks great.

12 Aim for height For beauty headshots, always shoot from a slightly higher angle. The reason for this is that whatever is closest to your lens will appear largest. So when you shoot from a slightly higher angle, the eyes of your subject will appear largest and stand out beautifully! If you tried shooting a headshot from a low angle, the chin is closest to the lens and appears largest, which is not a flattering look.

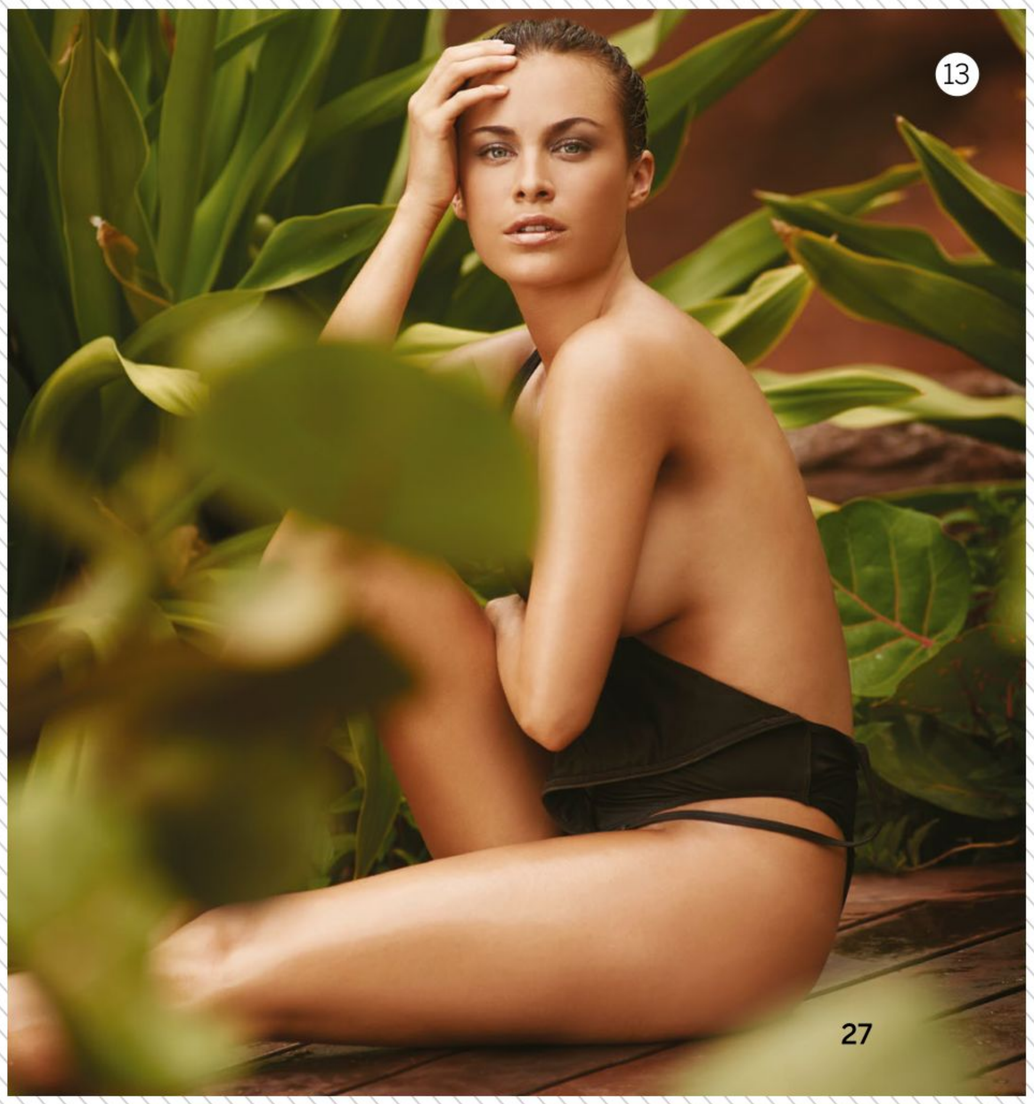
13 Use a longer lens Utilise longer focal length lenses for beauty headshots. I absolutely love using the Nikkor 200mm f2 or 300mm f4 lenses and the reason is that is has a stunning compression effect on faces and blurs the background. This is how I create all of my iconic beauty images. Never use wide-angle lenses for headshots because it will make their nose and forehead look much larger than it is. So if you have a Nikkor 70-200mm lens, try backing up and zooming to 200mm and then taking your headshot and you'll be amazed by the results.


10

MEET THE PRO
DIXIE DIXON

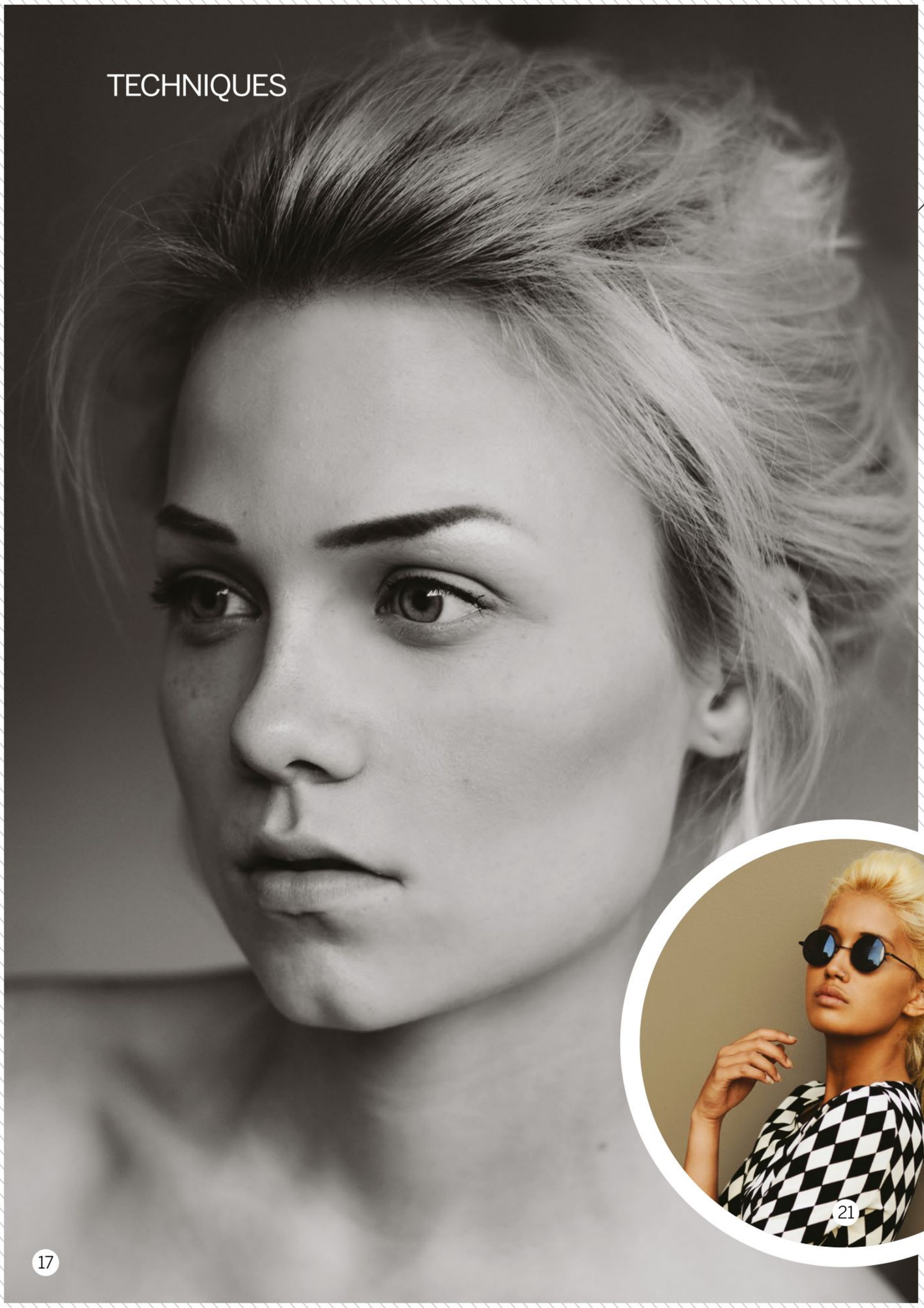


Dixon is a Texas born-and-bred commercial fashion photographer. This twenty-something's career is unfolding one adventure after another. She was given her first Nikon camera, the Nikon FG, at just 12 years old. While in college she studied in London with a world-renowned fashion photographer and became deeply inspired by the beautiful illusion of fashion and commercial photography. "As a fashion and beauty photographer, I am always looking to showcase the real raw beauty of my subjects."


13

5x © Dixie Dixon

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17

TAKE CONTROL OF A SHOOT

Show confidence to get more from your model in shoots

14 **Feel inspired by your subject** Be interested in your subject enough to want to take their photo. If you're inspired by the person standing in front of your camera, you'll be genuinely enthused to take their photo from every kind of angle possible.

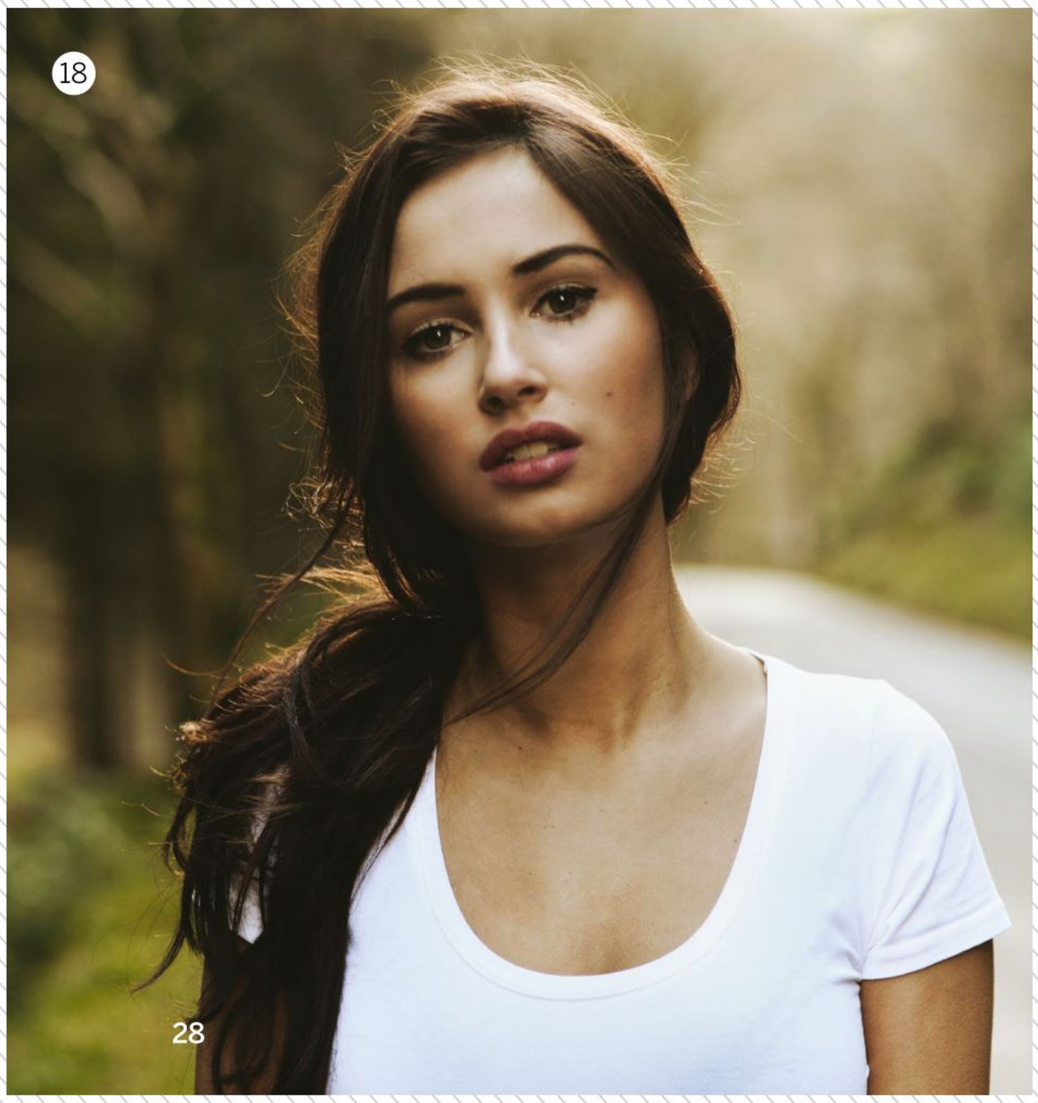
15 **Keep it positive** Talk through your ideas for the shoot so you're both on the same page. Even if things aren't translating on camera, never let your subject feel as though you're disappointed with the results. Remain positive [and] compliment their efforts.

16 **Work with a wide aperture** A 50mm f1.4 or f1.8 lens is my go-to lens for all things portrait, whether it's headshots, a fashion campaign featuring full-length shots, or even corporate projects. The clarity, shallow depth-of-field and adaptability in low-light situations make it perfect for portraits.

21

17 **The eyes have it** The eyes are the most important aspect to me when taking a portrait – they're what I instinctively look to in a photo. Make sure they're in focus and, if they're not, make sure there's a significant reason why.

18 **Don't be static** Keep your subject moving. Often – especially if you're shooting with someone who isn't used to working in front of the camera – you may find your subject is a little uncomfortable to pose. 'What do I do with my hands?' is a common one. A great solution is to keep them moving.

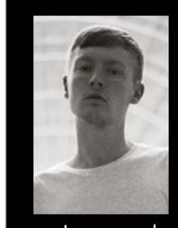


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MEET THE PRO

JACK ALEXANDER



Alexander is a 23-year-old self-taught photographer, specialising in intimate portraits with musicians, actors and models. He started out taking photos of friends, with the scenic backdrops of the Isle of Man helping shape his portfolio. Since moving to London, Jack has seen his work published in the likes of *British Vogue* and *The Observer*. While he still shoots with friends and even continues to scout strangers he spots in the street, his portfolio now includes the likes of Britney Spears, Zac Efron and Kim Kardashian.

4x © Jack Alexander

19 **Let subjects interact** Taking a photo that includes more than one person can feel like an entirely different ball game. I find that with most band shoots, it's best to forget about staged poses and instead to focus on the interaction between your subjects. Let them talk among themselves... Anything that means they're not self-conscious about how they look!

20 **Go it alone** You don't need a full team consisting of a stylist, make-up artist [and] hair stylist in order to produce great results. Often, subjects are more comfortable when wearing their own clothes... Subtle changes like altering a lipstick colour or removing a jacket go a long way. One of my favourite DIY changes is wetting my subject's hair.

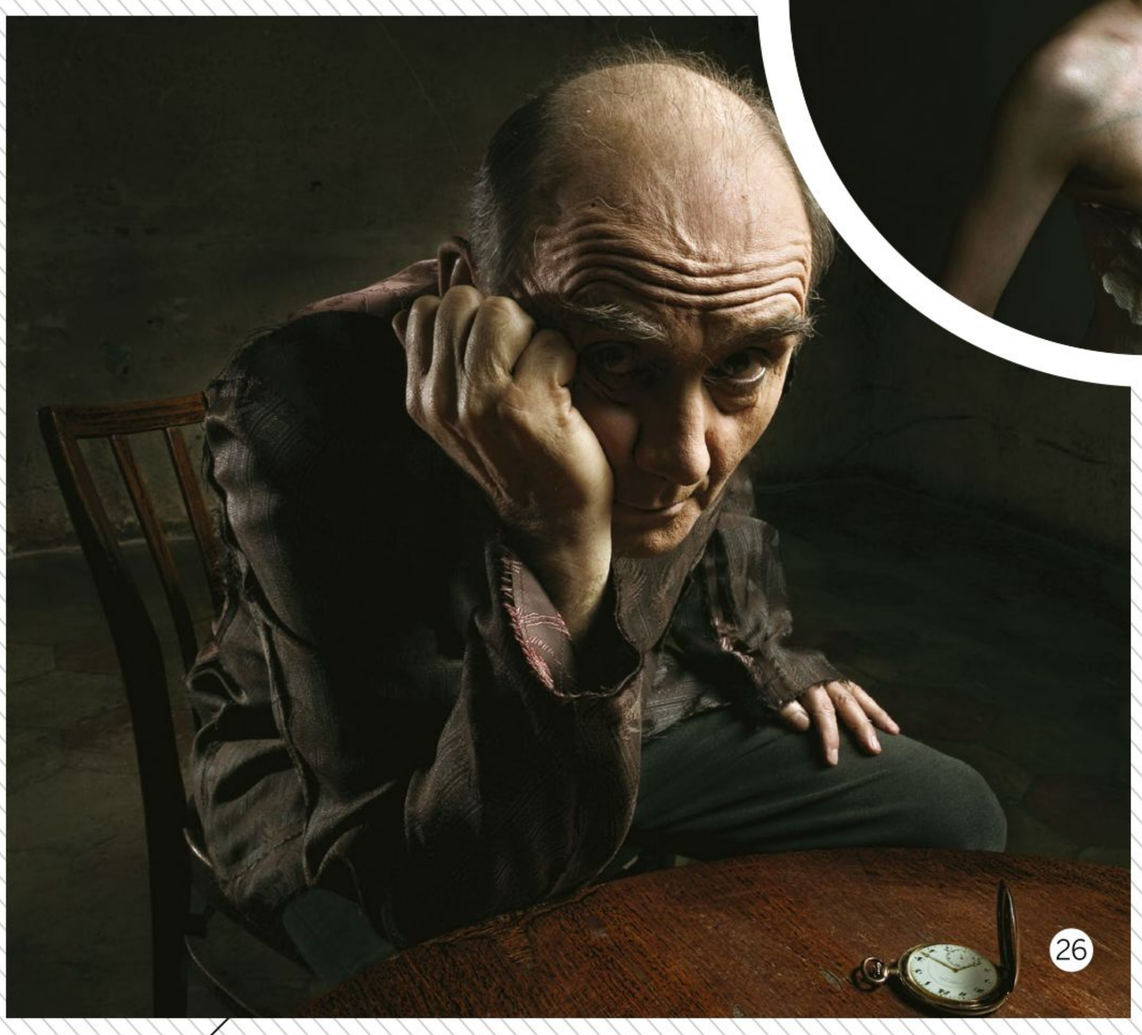
21 **Be confident** Easier said than done, but I find it comes with experience. Learn how to work your camera and maximise the results. Plan out the shoot in advance, decide what types of shots you're aiming for, and don't be afraid to really try and bring them to life.

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GET CREATIVE WITH PORTRAITS

Renowned photographer and online sensation Andrzej Dragan discusses how to produce unique, evocative portraits

22 Seek out intensity The most crucial part of taking a portrait is the right choice of the model. Your subject doesn't have to be beautiful – she or he has to be intense. Look out for the most interesting characters; don't be afraid of reaching out to strangers, pedestrians you meet on the streets. Most of them will agree to pose for you.

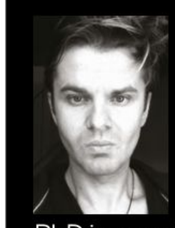
23 Be selective Take as few shots as possible. Try not to release the shutter until you have a chance to catch the right expression... For most of my shoots I was using a single 1GB flash card. An interesting challenge: take the whole week to pull the trigger just once and take only one photograph. Make it a good one.

24 Be original Originality is better than technical artistry. The most important advice: don't listen to anybody [else's] advice.

25 Don't worry about reality Photographing is lying. Have you ever seen a real black-and-white person? Don't be afraid of cheating in all ways possible. Most of the beauty commercial shots you see every day have the eyes magnified by 3-5%.

26 Consider the shadows and highlights It is worth keeping under control the part of the image that's the brightest and [the part of the image] that is the darkest.

MEET THE PRO
ANDRZEJ DRAGAN



Born in 1978, Dragan studied in Warsaw and on scholarships in Amsterdam, Oxford and Lisbon, got his PhD in quantum physics cum laude in 2005. Involved in photography since 2003, his work has been published in magazines and books in 12 countries, including Luzer's *200 Best Ad Photographers Worldwide* (2006). His portrait work has been much-imitated and has even given rise to the editing term 'Draganizing'. Now interested in film as well as imagery, in 2014 Andrzej established a movie production studio, Weird.

5x © Andrzej Dragan

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ACT LIKE A PRO

Be organised and approach shoots like you're an old hand

27 **Do your homework** Try to do as much research as you possibly can on the person you're going to photograph.

28 **Keep your lighting simple** I have a lighting mantra that comes from a fabulous photographer from the north-east of England called Jimmy Forsyth... When I asked him about how he lit his images he told me, "The fancy shades were there already, the Sun put them there." Whenever I start to overcomplicate my lighting setups I always think of Jimmy and I'll simplify it.

29 **Choose the right location** Locations should either be totally neutral so not to distract from the subject, relevant to your subject to add an element to the story telling, or be polar opposite to your subject like shooting a spaceman in a supermarket.

30 **Keep calm** It's important to stay as calm as possible on a shoot... I've dropped and smashed a £2,000 lens at the start of a shoot and I've calmly picked it up and popped it back in my camera bag.

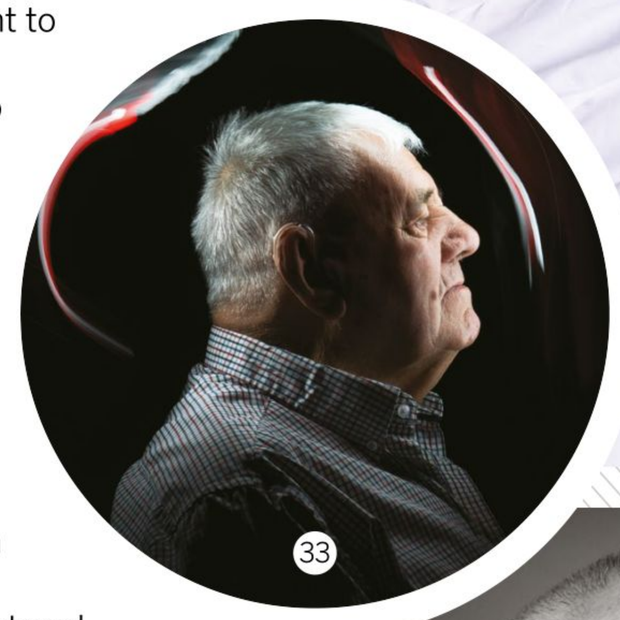
31 **Give your subject something to do with their hands** Make sure any props are relevant to your subject... Peter Gabriel has been photographed a thousand times and so I wanted to collaborate with him on ideas for the shoot. He created the All Seeing Eye by covering his face with his hands and even though you can't see his face it's undoubtedly [him].

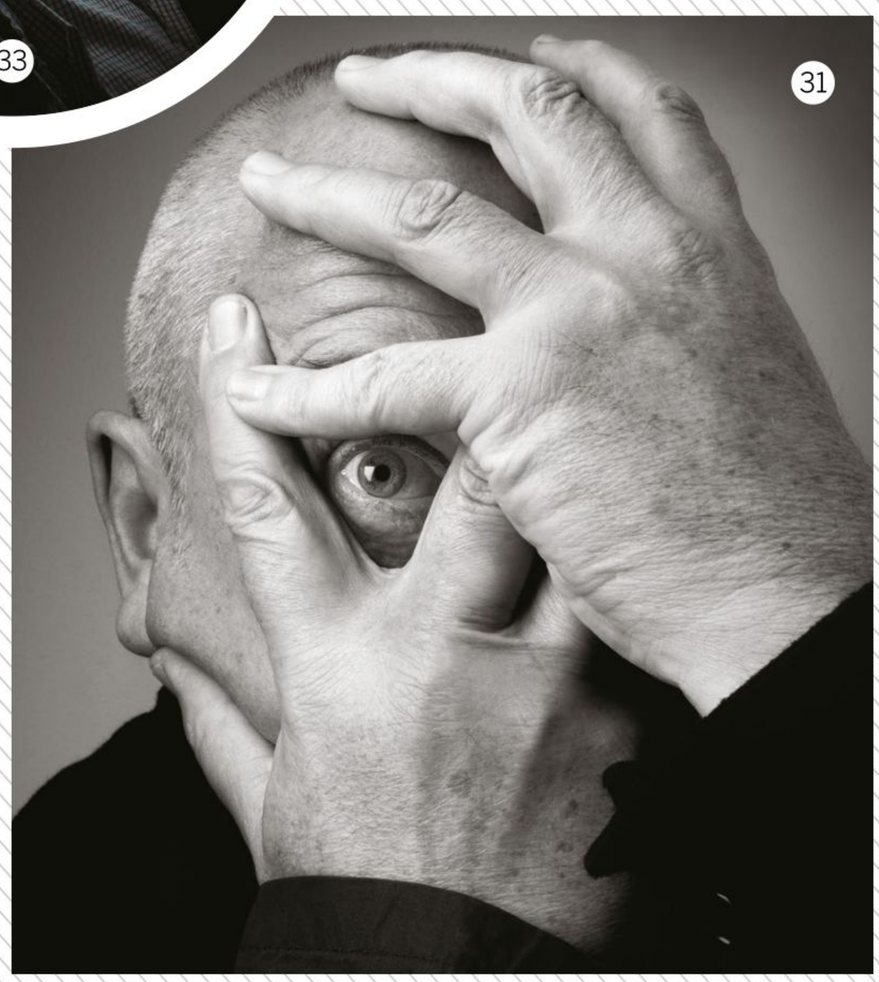
32 **Don't be afraid to scrap an idea last minute** I'd been commissioned to photograph singer-songwriter Laura Marling in her London flat and I'd planned to shoot on the rooftops... Five minutes before the shoot and the heavens opened... I quickly decided to shoot an aerial shot of Laura lying on the bed and took the flowers from a nearby vase.

33 **Think outside the box** I was shooting an assignment with Blind veterans UK and really wanted to create a photographic experience for someone who will never see the final visual image... The creative solution was to shoot the portraits in a pitch-black room in total silence using heat lamps as a light source. I shot each image on a slow shutter... [and moved] the heat lamp across the face of my subjects.

34 **Ditch the tripod** I prefer not to use a tripod for portraits... It takes me a few minutes to find my [angle].







4x © Andy Fallon

MEET THE PRO

ANDY FALLON



Andy has been working as photographer in London for 17 years. He studied photography at University of Northumbria in Newcastle before heading down to London to work as an assistant for a couple of years. He cut his teeth shooting for music magazines like *NME* and *MOJO* and has shot for the *Guardian*, *Sunday Times* and *The Telegraph*. His wife is also a photographer and family life is juggled around their shoots.

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HAVE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

Remembering to focus on what's important – and not forgetting your manners – is imperative

35 **Seek inspiration** Look at other peoples work. Work out the thing you like and dislike about your favourite pictures. You can then use your knowledge to influence and inspire your own work.

36 **Don't get bogged down in kit** You don't need to have the best camera to take the best photos. It's what you put in front of the lens that's important.

37 **Practise** It seems obvious, but practice makes perfect. The more you do it, the better you get. Even if it's just taking photos of friends and family it'll help you gain experience and become more comfortable when you're on a shoot.

38 **Experiment** Try things out. You'll become a better photographer by experimenting with different techniques and ideas. Not everything will work but you learn as much from your mistakes as your successes.

39 **Be discreet** Always remember you will be able to share the final photos *after* the magazine or client's approval. Don't get excited and share them before.

40 **Be grateful** At the end of the shoot, be sure you captured the perfect shot for each setup. Don't forget to thank everyone for their time and experience. At the end of the day, this is a team effort.

41 **Be conscious of time** Sometimes portrait photo shoots are ruled by time. You can find yourself in situations where you have very little time with your subject. Prepare the locations and the lighting in advance. Your subject can just walk from one set to the other.

MEET THE PRO
ROCCO CESELIN



Born and raised in Italy, Rocco Ceselin completed his studies in photography and creative design at the Advertising School in Udine, Italy. In 2001 he began to explore the vibrant environment of Northern California, moving to San Francisco. He quickly gained a solid reputation as a creative photographer with an impressive listing of satisfied clients in both San Francisco and the Napa Valley. He now lives in the heart of Hollywood, where his creative core is fuelled by the celebrated diversity of the area.

© Rocco Ceselin



© Shamil Tanna

MEET THE PRO
SHAMIL TANNA



An award-winning photographer based in London, Tanna has photographed everyone from Paul Weller to Stephen Fry. His eye-catching style and approach have very quickly made him one of the most sought-after young photographers working today. He is known for his technical ability and creative lighting style.

Shamil Tanna has photographed some of the world's most iconic musicians, politicians, actors and sports stars including Lady Gaga, Rihanna, Iggy Pop, Radiohead, Pele, and David Cameron among many others.

© Shamil Tanna



© Shamil Tanna

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38



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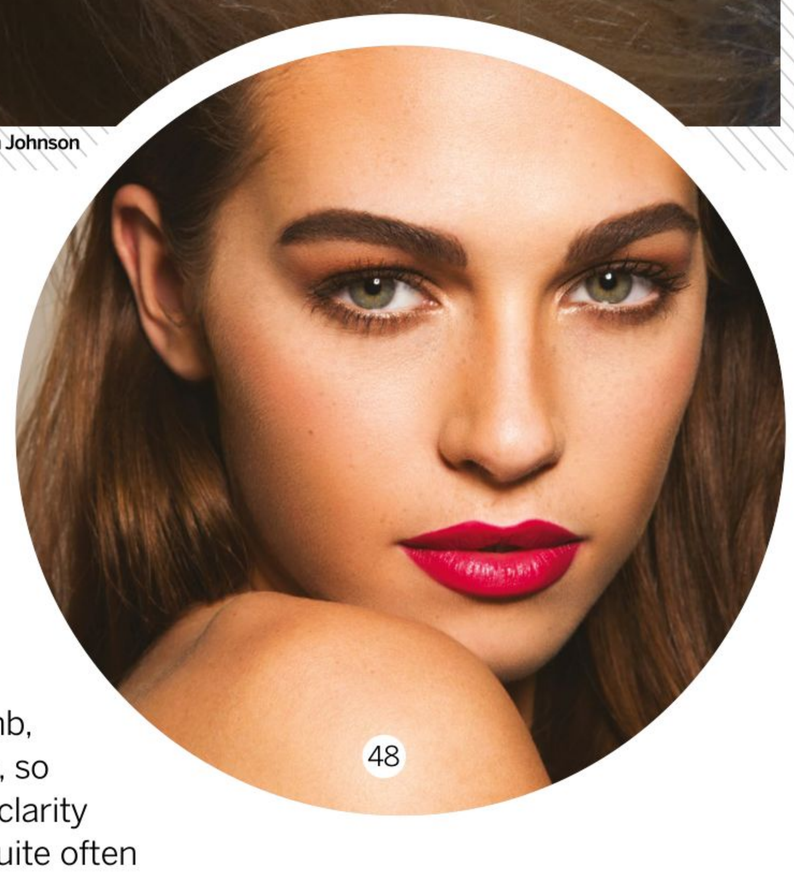
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2x © Tim Johnson

RETOUCH TO PERFECTION

How your images are processed makes a huge difference to their ultimate impact



42 **Understand the shot** Before you retouch, think of the purpose and the vision behind it. If a mole distracts from the make-up and the make-up is the subject, it may have to go; if the model is the subject, of course it stays. I have a shot in my portfolio with watery, smeared, uneven eye make-up, just because I like the way it looked, in others I've drawn in every missing eyelash.

43 **Remember the details** If you're working on a shot where the skin work is time consuming it's easy to become blind to other problems. Make yourself a mental checklist, eyes, lashes, corners of the mouth, nostrils etc. And make sure you've given everything its due attention.

44 **A flaw isn't always a flaw** The beauty is in the details, and unless a client demands otherwise I'll go out of my way to avoid removing freckles and beauty marks. An occasional flyaway hair might be a welcome removal, but if they're consistent... They need to stay.

45 **Work small** When healing and cloning it's best to work with a small, hard-edged brush... I tend to zoom in at 200 to 300 per cent and use a small brush with a Hardness of 95%. This prevents blurred edges.

46 **Dodge and burn** After healing any unwanted elements, dodging and burning can make a great shot stunning... Even if super-flawless isn't your goal, experiment with carving deeper shadows and accentuating highlights.

47 **A quick note on men** As a rule of thumb, portraits of men can stand a little more grit, so feel free to be more liberal with sharpness, clarity and contrast... If your model is male then quite often enhancing what some might dismiss as flaws can make a good shot amazing.

48 **Balancing colour** It can often take a while to develop an eye that'll spot shifts in hue... Always check for these shifts. Is there more red in the decolletage than the face, a magenta ear perhaps? Adobe Photoshop's Curves channels or Selective Color adjustments with masks are a great solution.

49 **Don't rely on quick fixes** There are plenty of one-click plug-ins available, and they can be a boon for the portrait photographer needing a quick turnaround, but results with them can be sketchy and rarely, if ever, stand up to much scrutiny.

50 **Keep it natural** Retaining the humanity of your subject is vital, even with the flawless beauty look. Be careful not to over-soften skin [or] over-brighten eyes.

MEET THE PRO

DANIEL MEADOWS



Daniel Meadows is a professional retoucher whose clients include a list of celebrities and some of the biggest names in advertising and fashion.

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THE ART OF POSING FOR PORTRAITS

Learn to pose both male and female models and produce captivating portraits full of emotion

The art of successful posing is absolutely vital for great portrait photography. Unless one is shooting candids, the photographer must interact with the subject and direct them in order to achieve the very best possible results, as well as understanding how to place the subject within the frame for compositional purposes. This all sounds like an instinctive process that requires little conscious thought – and for some more experienced portrait photographers, it is – but for most it requires deliberate, considered attention. Over the next few pages, you'll discover techniques for posing female subjects, male models and group shots, enabling you to take your portrait photography to a more professional level and create incredible images.

Aim for allure
Encourage your female subjects to touch their face and hair for a more sensual pose

© Oleg Gekman

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POSE FEMALE SUBJECTS

Discover how to work with female models to create seductive and sensual captures

The perfect pose is key for creating a good portrait, both for flattering your model and also for conveying the mood and overall feel of your image. Lighting, hair and make-up are very important too, however the pose and positioning of your subject will arguably have the biggest effect on the final image.

When photographing a female subject your aim should be to enhance her natural beauty and features, so you must pay close attention to any unflattering and unforgiving angles. Having a chat with your model before the shoot is always encouraged and can help you with your setup and pose. If the model is experienced she might already know her best and most favoured side, or the most flattering angle to position her head. Asking about this first will help you to quickly understand what works best for your subject.

As always the body part closest to the camera will appear larger, so you must be aware of what that is. You should also focus on how the model's arms are positioned, as even the thinnest of models can look larger due to a misplaced arm.

Your goal should be to work to define the jawline. If your model's jawline isn't clearly defined then shoot from slightly above looking down, as this gives the jawline more definition and will also slim the body. It might even be a good idea to ask the subject to lean into the camera. Leaning her face towards you will elongate the subject's neck, define the chin and should encourage her hair to fall beautifully across her shoulders. It may also help you to emphasise the size of the model's eyes, which can be a very attractive and desired trait.

To create a more seductive image get the model to tilt her head downwards slightly, asking her to look up at you with her eyes. Ask the model to relax her jaw so that her lips part, then get her to press her tongue into the roof of her mouth. Asking her to play with her hair or touch her face will also create a more sensual and alluring image.

"Poses are always chosen in accordance to the image in mind," explains beauty fashion photographer Oleg Gekman (**500px.com/heckmannoleg**). "An important factor is the choice of the best angle for every model. I try to avoid hard light for women's portraits. I create a soft lighting that enhances the beauty of the model's skin and her make-up and hair. To achieve that I use softboxes and a beauty dish with a scrim. To soften shadows I use a deflector and white panels."

Hands in hair
Give the model something to do with their hands. Hands in hair helps to create a sensual image

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EYE CONTACT
Direct eye contact will help to engage the viewer

PARTED LIPS
Her lips are slightly parted, which aids in defining the jaw and creates an alluring expression

DEFINED JAWLINE
The model's jawline is clearly defined, creating a flattering shot

HAND ON FACE
Having the model touch her face helps to create a more alluring image

ESSENTIAL KIT

Gather key accessories in order to shoot the best possible portraits



REFLECTOR
A reflector is truly key for all portraiture; use it to bounce the light back into the model's face to fill any unflattering shadows. Reflectors can be used for both male and female models effectively.



BEAUTY DISH
Similar to a reflector, a beauty dish can be used with a studio light to further illuminate a model's face and ensure harsh shadows are lifted. They are commonly used for female portraits.



GOBO
You can add some extra creativity to your portraits by adding a gobo attached to a light into your setup. Use it to create some interesting shadows across the model's face and body.

© Oleg Gekman

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INCORPORATE THE SURROUNDINGS

Enhance your portraits by including props and add context by embracing the environment

Integrating props and the surrounding environment into your portraits is a great way of adding context and personality to your shots. It can help to tell a story and add a narrative to your imagery. Props and accessories will add atmosphere and also help the viewer to understand the personality, emotions and role of the subject.

Environmental portraits can be very powerful, whether you are just making the most of nature to add interest to your imagery or are using the environment to tell a story about your character – it will help to draw the viewer in and hold their attention.

Props can also add creativity and contrast to a scene. For example, adding an object that doesn't quite fit and seems out of place can actually add a level of conflict and intrigue into an image, which will help to hold the viewer's attention and force them to really think about what they are looking at. In addition, props can often tell us more about the photographer themselves, and can be a way of distinguishing the photographer's work from someone else's.

"As I mostly deal with beauty portraits my shooting props are different jewellery, clothes and other accessories," says Gekman. "At first, I decide what kind of image I am going to create, and then I choose props for the shooting. I always come up with the theme for a photoshoot myself – I think through every detail in the image of the model and buy accessories."

> "Props will help the viewer understand the emotions and role of the subject"



© Oleg Gekman

ADD EXTRA INTEREST

Match the pose to the props or the environment



© Oleg Gekman

USE THE PROP
Here the prop is a camera, so it would look odd if the prop wasn't being used. Ask the model to actually use the object for its intended purpose.



© Rebecca Greig

INTERACT WITH THE ENVIRONMENT
Ask the subject to lean on something within the scene in order to incorporate it into the shot. Having something to lean on can also help a subject to look and feel less awkward.

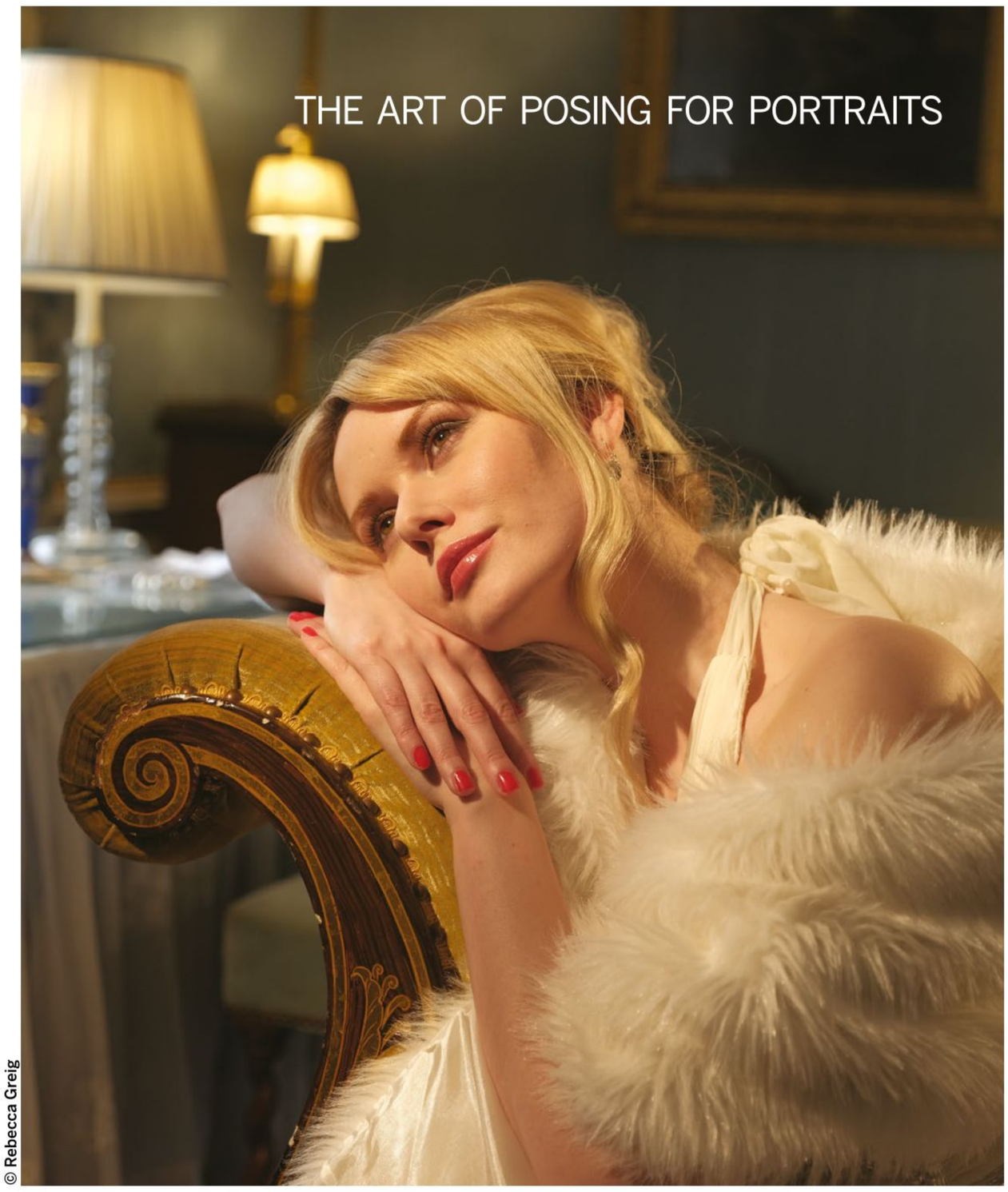


© Rebecca Greig

WEAR IT
Props don't have to be objects, they can also be dominating clothing. Ensure that the piece of clothing is the focus in the shot and use it to tell the story or convey emotions.

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Left
Tie the colours together
Here the model is holding flowers that match the background colours, and this helps to tie the image together

Above
Create balance
Use the elements of the environment to create balance in a scene

Below
Create abstracts
Props can also be used to create more abstract and evocative imagery



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POSE MALE MODELS

Effectively pose male models for striking imagery

The main difference between men and women is their body shape. Women are generally less angular than men, while the male body consists of defined angles and rigid shapes. For Gekman, "While creating a man's portrait I follow the same rules as for a woman's one. I choose poses depending on the theme of the shoot and the image I want to create. For men's portraits I usually use harder lighting. As a rule, there are one or two sources of light, I put up a sidelight to get deeper shadows and to make the image more dramatic. To create deeper shadows I use black panels. In addition, I use one source of light to illuminate the distance shot thus separating the model from the background."

Samuel Bouget (**www.portraitsbysam.com**) says, "Because often the intention behind a male portrait will not be the same as the one behind a female portrait, posing will be affected. Male portraiture is not generally considered in terms of beauty or pleasing appearance, but more in terms of conveying an impression of confidence, strength, willpower or any other quality generally associated with manhood. Helping a man pose well will be easier once you have decided which impression you want to convey to the viewer. For example, if you ask a model to convey an impression of strength and confidence, telling him that this is your intention will help him a lot. You may then ask him to close his eyes (I use this tip a lot and it works very well for me) and think of moments in the past when he was very confident – the confidence should be seen in his eyes. Asking him to lower his head just a little may increase the impression of strength and determination. With this intention in mind, a posing mistake, in my opinion, would be to tilt the head back a little, for this conveys more of an impression of haughtiness. Or, if the body was too slumped, it may prevent you from conveying confidence.

"If you are following me with this notion of intention, and the fact that the posing will depend on the type of portrait you want to make, I think you will understand that I cannot give you a list of poses that work best for men. However, I think we can say that some poses will probably work better for men than for women because of the impression they convey. For example, asking a man to cross his arms, to put his hand or his hands in his pockets, or do up buttons of a jacket.

"The light setups I use will be the same as the ones described for female models, but I may use harder light. For instance, the age of the model may change the way I light him. If the person is quite old for example, I may try to use harder light to emphasise the wrinkles and thus the character of the model. However, hard light may also be interesting for a younger model if you intend to have a more dramatic effect."



© Sandra Limberg

Above
Strong lines
Use lighting to emphasise the texture and rigid lines on a man's face

SHOOT A MALE SUBJECT



1 Pose a man Direct the model with your own pose, so that they understand how you want the shot to look and can see where they need to be in relation to the lighting.



2 Lighting Use a beauty dish to highlight the majority of your subject. It will give you a wider spill of light as well as hard light, aiding the shadow detail.



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POSE TWO SUBJECTS

Learn how to shoot with more than one subject

Having more than one person in your scene will become more of a challenge. You'll need to consider how to light and frame each subject to ensure that each person is framed in a flattering manner.

If you are shooting a couple or even close friends your aim will most likely be to show a connection, interaction and feelings between the subjects. Even in scenes where the subjects don't necessarily have a relationship, the models should still engage with each other in order to create a level of harmony in the scene.

"You definitely need more patience and a perspective view for details," explains Sandra Limberg (**sollena-photography.de**). "For photos with more than two people I am always happy to have assistance with me to watch and keep an eye on the details. For group pictures it is important that the people in the group like each other. In my opinion, distances and discrepancies in photos are visible immediately. If all optical details are right, I leave them be. In groups, I'll give a little more guidance and instructions concerning movements or who should look in which direction, but basically, let them be people. Let them be a group."

Bouget explains that, "The rules for posing with more than one person will actually be the same as posing with one person. You will have to observe the same details as the ones as I have told you to pay attention to throughout this feature. The additional thing you may be able to do will be to create an interaction between the models in terms of posing according to the story you want to tell.

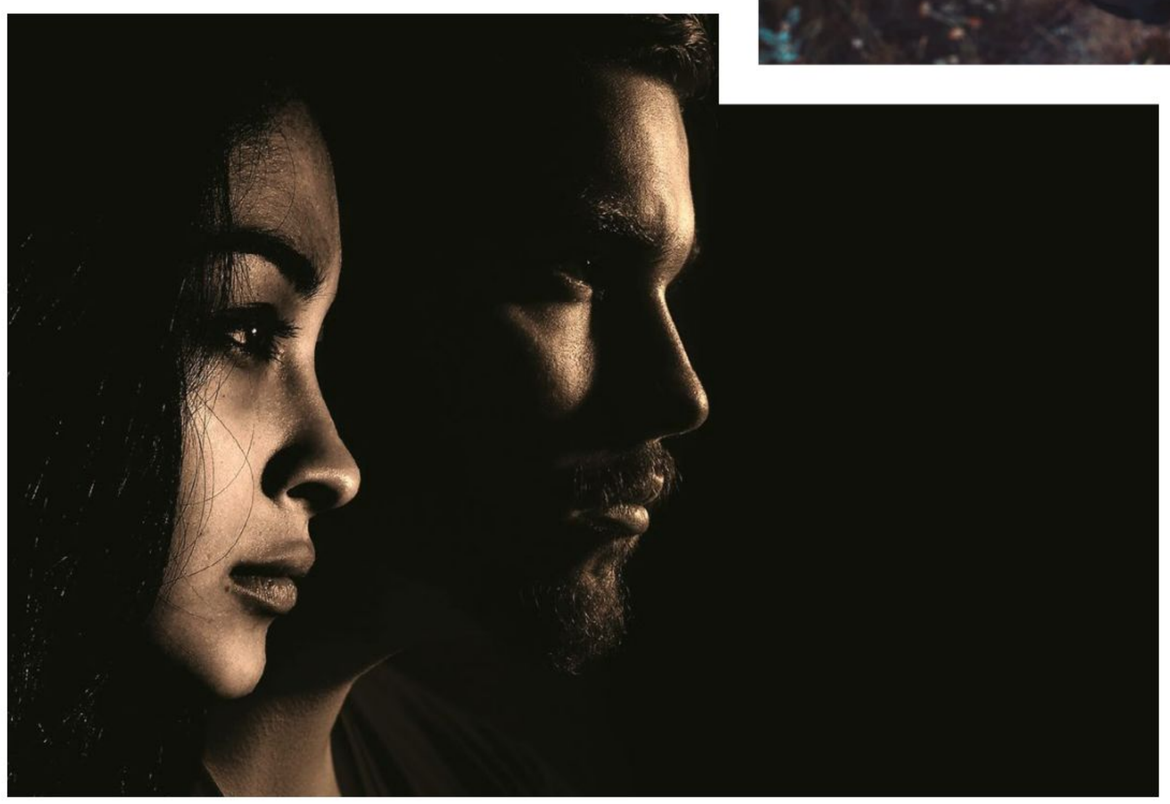
"For a family the first lighting setup is one large source above me (you will need an overhead boom arm). This way everybody will get about the same quantity of light, with nice soft shadows on their face. The bigger the family, the larger the light source will need to be. For a family you may also want to use two light sources, one above you about one metre away on your left, and one above you about one metre away on your right.

"These two lighting setups will make it easier for you to have flattering shadows on the faces of every member of the family. With only one light source placed on the left or right, the person who is the furthest from the light source will get less light than the other members of the family, and will run the risk of having less flattering shadows – though of course retouching is possible afterwards.

"It all depends on the story I want to tell. Do I want to put emphasis on one of the models in contrast with the other? Do I want to light them 'equally'? If the light is hard, I may use the sun as a backlight for example. I may shoot in the shade and make the family/model's face where the main light source is. If the light is soft because it is cloudy, I will generally make the family/model's face where the main light source is."



© Samual Bouget



Above
From above
Approach your capture from a variety of different angles for a new approach to the image's narrative

Right
Harmony
How you pose your models together will depend on the story you wish to tell in your image

Left
Shadow
For a more attention-grabbing capture consider a creative lighting approach



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CENTRAL ELEMENT
Here the door in this shot helps to anchor the image

DYNAMISM
Emphasise the movement with flowing material

ACTIVITY
You can get your models to move around for a more energetic shot

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POSE A LARGER GROUP

Discover how to direct a group of subjects

Shooting group portraits is a great way to perfect your communication skills from behind the camera. If you don't make your voice heard and ensure that all of the subjects listen to you and understand what you are trying to achieve, you will fail.

Try to think creatively. You should always avoid trying to get all of your subjects' heads on the same level; don't try to perfectly align them as it will simply look unnatural and very forced. Embrace the variety and go out of your way to get everyone's heads on a different level. Your aim should be to create a pattern of faces as well as an attractive shape. Posing your subjects on stairs is a great way of ensuring their heads will sit on different levels.

The most important thing about group portraits is to make sure everyone is visible and that nobody is accidentally obscured. Consider where each subject is positioned. Obviously if it's a corporate group picture the subjects should be positioned further apart than for an image of close friends or family, where you would want to keep things reasonably tight.

Creating a triangle with the subjects' faces generally works quite well. Be careful not to go too obscure and creative unless that is the goal. Fashion and beauty group shots will work with a concept and flare of creativity, but if the image is a commissioned portrait you need to ensure the full focus is on the people captured.

"In a group portrait I usually want to reflect communication among models, and their attitude to each other," explains Oleg Gekman. "If it is a family portrait, then with the help of various composition devices and lighting I try to communicate their feelings in the photo. The concept of lighting is defined by using a lot of light sources with bigger-diameter softboxes. In most cases I shoot in a studio – there are mostly classic portraits on a uniform background, I hardly ever shoot in interiors or outside."



Below
Connection
Keep your compositions tight, especially when your subjects are friends or family

Above
Road trip
Make your group shots interesting and try shooting from some different, more unusual angles



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LEARN TO POSE WITH PERFECTION

Professional photographer Samual Bouget shares some top tips for posing your subjects

1 ASYMMETRY OF THE FACE

If you notice that some parts of the face are asymmetric (it can be the mouth, the nose, the eyebrows), then try to consider using light and posing to divert the look away from this asymmetry, for greater interest. In terms of posing, this can mean tilting and/or turning the head right or left to avoid facing the model. In terms of lighting, this can also mean avoiding simplistic butterfly lighting.

2 PAY ATTENTION TO THE ALIGNMENT OF THE SHOULDERS

Asking the model to put their shoulders in three quarters view will generally be an option that works for every model. It will also add depth to your pictures with the line that the shoulders will draw.

3 SHAPE WITH HAIR

If the face is a bit round or square you may also use the hair to break this impression by asking the model to bring a few locks of hair on the sides of their face. Of course, in this case, avoid having the hair attached.

4 POSITION THE ARMS

If you are doing a side profile picture and the model is bare armed, you may ask the model to detach their arm a little from the body and turn it slightly, as this will help the arm look less wide.

5 GET THEM MOVING

If you make a portrait of somebody who feels uneasy because they lack experience for example, make them move if you want them to look more natural in their posing. Movement in general is a good technique to consider if you want to convey some energy.

6 BE AS FLATTERING AS POSSIBLE

There may be elements of a person's body or face that you wish to either emphasise or de-emphasise. For example, if somebody has a large forehead, you can use a longer lens and a slightly lower point of view to make it look less obvious. If a person has a double chin, you may for example take a higher point of view in order to make it a bit less visible.

7 CHOOSE A LONGER LENS

With some subjects, opting for a longer lens can be the most appropriate choice. For example, if a person has a big nose and if you use a short lens, you will make it look bigger, which might not be desirable in the look you are going for.

8 KEEP A PORTFOLIO OF YOUR SUCCESSFUL POSES

To finish, the various social networks that exist today offer you the possibility to make your own posing guide by recording the poses that you find most flattering (I mainly use Instagram and Pinterest for this purpose). Don't forget that not every pose can be used for any situation.



© Samuel Bouget

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Learn to capture

PORTRAITS *with* IMPACT

Discover how to create incredible images that convey a sense of character

Capturing portraits that make people want to look twice is something that every photographer desires to achieve, and very often what's required for that to be the case is plenty of visible character in the image. This is obviously a very nebulous subject and can be interpreted in a number of different ways. What defines character to one person is not necessarily what defines character to someone else, and there are many different methods and approaches that one can adopt when it comes to capturing a portrait with impact. Over the next few pages, however, you will discover some of the key considerations and skills that photographers can utilise in order to increase their chances of success in this respect. From lighting on location to simple setups that you can try at home, all the way through to street and travel photography, there's something here for almost any type of portrait photographer. Read on to discover the techniques that the pros use to help them.

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Left

Capture character

A sense of personality from the subject you are photographing will make a big difference to your image

© Kerry Moore

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CHOOSE YOUR APPROACH

The technical aspects of a character portrait are often second to your interpersonal skills

As with so many elements of photography, there are very different approaches that you can choose to take when it comes to shooting portraits with character. One might argue that all portraits must convey character if they are to succeed. "Portraiture is a broad field of photography," says pro photographer Jarek Duk (jarekduk.com). "It can be broken down into many more specific areas like simple head shots, studio portraits, environmental portraits and so on. Each one of them will carry its own technical aspects but one thing is true for them all: successful portraits need to have personality and character." But what defines character, and how do you ensure that this is present in your portraits? Perhaps the most essential element is that you have to show something that's real – a genuine reflection of a genuine person. "You have to learn the basics of your gear, lighting and composition first. However, you don't need to be, as many believe, a master of all of the above to shoot great portraits with character. You just need to be confident enough so the technical aspects do not stand between you and the human being in front of your camera – after all, this is the most important ingredient of the work you are about to produce. One of my favourite photographers once said, 'In order to shoot great portraits you have to be 10 per cent photographer and 90 per cent psychologist.' I could not agree more. So all the technical aspects that beginners [sometimes] like to focus on so much are contributing merely 10 per cent to your final success, the other 90 per cent is your ability to connect with the subjects, your interpersonal skills, the respect you give your subjects, the comfort zone you will create for them so their personalities can shine through. The images you see actually feature real barbers and their clients. No models would ever give me this much personality and character. Prior to the shoot I had spent pretty much the entire day with these guys. I got a haircut, listened to their stories, got to know them on a personal level and even got a shot of bourbon from under the counter. Yes, it took a lot of time and preparation but in return I walked away with a set of great images and the feeling that it was worth it."



Above

Real lives

These portraits aren't of models, but instead feature real barbers with their clients. Jarek Duk argues that the most important part of shooting portraits with character is to capture the stories of real, genuine people, and develop good interpersonal skills in order to get to know your subjects and build a level of trust

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4x © Jarek Duk

Right
Keep it simple
Window light is one of the simplest but most effective light sources, and the lack of fuss involved can be ideal for capturing portraits with character

Far-right
Shoot it quickly
Many of the best portraits with character were captured very quickly, in a situation where the photographer didn't have long in which to get the shot

MAKE IT SEEM SPONTANEOUS

Photographer Pete Bartlett (petebartlett.com) discusses the work of Jane Bown – a master at capturing the most engaging sense of character

I've been lucky enough to shoot a few of the same famous faces as Jane Bown, and have been told a number of times that I've chosen the exact same spot that Miss Bown chose herself. One example was Ian Hislop, who I photographed in the Private Eye offices when I was starting out. It was print day and there was a lot of stress around the office. I tried a few different setups with him but his mind wasn't really with me. When my time was up I reviewed the images and I knew I didn't have the killer shot I needed. In a move of almost Bown-like tenacity I crept up beside him while he was talking heatedly to the print manager and asked nervously if I might grab him for one last shot. I took him all the way to the top of the internal stairwell where earlier I'd spotted a little skylight window casting some lovely Rembrandtesque light onto the stairs. He focused for a few shots and gave me 'the shot', one I've always been fond of.
As we went down the stairs he told me I was only the second person to take him to that skylight to be photographed. The other was you know who!

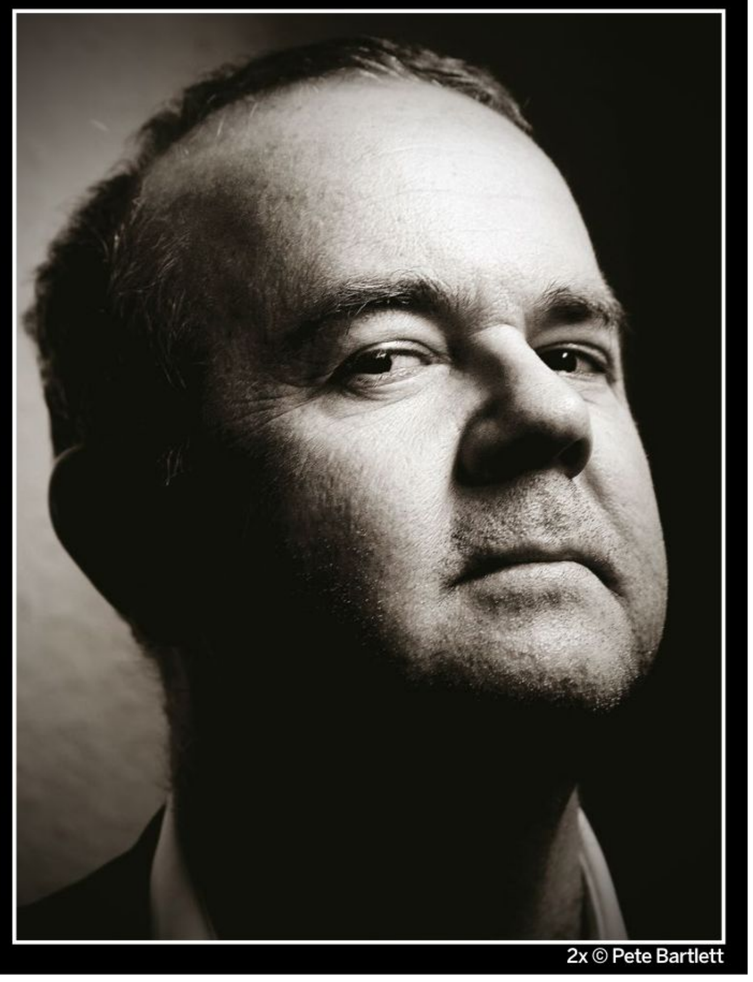
Jane Bown was a master of using natural light for her portraiture. Famously she said, "I last changed my camera 50 years ago. All I need is a good face and the right light." Getting skilled at using natural light begins by looking and noting down what you see 'in real life', then trying to replicate that in your own pictures. For example, Bown's Beckett picture is shot in a doorway. Doorways can often produce a beautiful light. You want to get the subject out of direct sunlight, as you want to avoid harsh shadows. Having the door open gives them a nice dark backdrop to pop out of.

For similar reasons, canal bridges can provide beautiful light for portraits. Again, you want to recess the subject out of the direct light. This tunnel or doorway effect can be replicated by setting something up in your garden or wherever you have room. In the past I've used the frame of a super-lightweight greenhouse. I've covered the top and partway down the sides with black sheeting. Straightaway you have a tunnel/doorway that you can move around to find the right light and backdrop combo. It produces a beautiful light for headshot-style portraits.

Bown uses window light fantastically well. The general rule is that if it's a sunny day and there's a lot of light kicking about, look for a north-facing window. Skylights can work well, but so too can a big window. In the portrait of Jo Brand I sat her to the side of a big Georgian window. So as to avoid too big a shadow and also to get the window catchlights in her eyes, I asked her to look out of the window. It's very simple but the big light source gives a very soft and beautiful light. Looking out of the window gives a wistful, reflective look to the face.

In a more abstract sense I think an important part of Bown's 'technique' was to simply be herself. I am sure that because she was honest and unpretentious, she got honest and unpretentious portraits from people. Beyond asking people to be positioned where I want them, I never ask them to 'do' anything for me. I want them to be who they are in that moment.





2x © Pete Bartlett

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WORK WITH NATURAL LIGHT

Trevor Cole discusses his approach to capturing well-exposed travel and street portraits with impact

I try to shoot in the golden hours or at least where there is shade from the Sun, and I always use natural light. Most of my portraits are shot while travelling and I strive to use light in a variety of ways. The soft, warm light at sunrise and sunset is unquestionably the best, as the lower angle of the Sun creates glow and shadows are less harsh. In some cases side lighting can be used very effectively by the photographer using spot metering to highlight contrasts. Where the subjects are facing the warm light their faces take on an inimitable glow, which enhances the portrait. In situations where the light is overhead and generates shadow it is still imperative to shoot, if opportunity arises. It is here that the photographer must use a little enterprise. Trees provide shade and diffuse the light. Doorways, the shaded side of the street and umbrellas all create opportunity to avoid the intensity of the midday Sun. Natural light from windows can create interesting reflections and the presence of dust or smoke in the air creates beams, which provide an atmosphere in which to capture those inimitable moments.



USE SPOT METERING

Trevor Cole looks at the benefits of working with this mode

I use spot metering specifically when I want a well-lit portrait to stand apart from a darker background, and also when there are marked contrasts in lighting. For example, in the shot on the right I spot-metered on a highlighted area to ensure it was exposed correctly, while at the same time casting the darker areas into shadow.

Low-key Here spot metering has been employed to create a low-key effect.

High-key I used spot metering here to ensure that the subject's face was perfectly exposed. The background was lighter, apart from the folds in the scarf, creating a high-key image.



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All images © Trevor Cole



Left
Work with contrast
A Cuban on the streets of Havana. Here I took advantage of bright, reflected light on the street, but also a shadowed background to provide the variation in lighting

Above
Use shafts of light
An Ethiopian priest in a rock-hewn church in Gheralta, Tigrai, Ethiopia. The light from a window created wonderful tones and contrast as well as casting light onto the rock face



HIGH-KEY

CONVERT TO BLACK AND WHITE

If you are looking to emphasise character, removing the colour can offer many advantages

With the colour taken away, this portrait takes on a much more direct and immediate quality, with the attention going straight to the woman's wizened expression and haunting gaze.

Rather than being a means of simply improving imperfect images, converting to black and white makes it even more important that the portrait itself is a strong one.





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Left
Afar woman
A woman of the Afar tribe, Danakil desert, Ethiopia. The extraordinarily direct eye contact gives the viewer a sense of the woman's soul

Below-left
Keep it real
A young boy from the Entoto hills, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The boy's direct yet hesitant gaze suggest a youthful vulnerability. For the most impact, your portraits should always be believable

Below-right
Shoot the moment
An old Romanian man on the streets of a town in Maramures, Romania. His expression and facial characteristics were encapsulated in the moment. A spontaneous shot taken with the available light

All images © Trevor Cole

CONSIDER THE POSE

The success of a portrait often depends on the subject's expression and position in the frame

Trevor Cole's approach to travel and street photography involves deciding on both who to photograph and how to capture them. "With time I have come to select who I want to photograph, envisaging the outcome ahead of shooting," explains Cole. "Taking portraits of people in the marketplace, street or in a tribal village requires interaction. There are clandestine shots that are often taken with a longer lens and are discreet, but most of my portraiture is a product of interpersonal moments. I like to get to know the characters being photographed. I always ask and even when my efforts are rejected I respect their choice. Sometimes, even with difficult subjects, spending a little time and using a little humour can yield positive results. In Ethiopia, one of my favourite travel destinations, most people are relatively easy to photograph except, perhaps, for those who are more conservative culturally and/or religiously. Even then, I relish the challenge and will certainly try! If feasible I seek backgrounds that are uniform or dark in their colouration. Spot metering combined with a wide aperture (f1.4/2.8) helps to ensure that the portrait stands apart and there is little distraction. Where this isn't feasible I shoot to capture the moment, again using a wide aperture to blur background distraction. I may take a number of frames to ensure that the image is sharp. With tribal peoples photography is different. I am very sensitive to the impacts of tourism, hence I will always try to make visits sustainable and not promote 'zooification'! I strive to capture light, colour, emotion, insight, character and spirit. In the right light, at the right time, the ordinary becomes extraordinary and that is something to aspire to."





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WORK WITH MODELS

Include a sense of character in your fashion and beauty shots

Whenever the brief allows, you should seek to let the character of your subject shine through. Talking to your model before and during the shoot and finding out what makes them tick as a person is always a good start, but when you are directing a subject for a specific purpose – as can often be the case – it can be hard to capture a sense of their true character at the same time. Jarek Duk explains that it's possible to observe the model's natural movements and mannerisms and allow these to inform the way you conduct the shoot. "[Pay attention to] the way they walk, the way they smile, the way they flick their hair," Duk says. "As one famous fashion designer once said, 'The style is not what you wear, but how you wear it'."

The essential key to achieving this is the ability to be flexible – have a plan for the shoot, but don't necessarily allow these ideas to override what's actually working with the model during the day. With experience and practice, you will be able to incorporate a model's personality into the shoot, no matter how precise the brief is.

Models matter

Sensitive and experienced portrait photographers will pay attention to the character and personality of the model they are working with, incorporating their specific traits and characteristics into the shoot



All images © Jarek Duk





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SHOOT AND EDIT ON LOCATION

Go behind the scenes with pro Tom Barnes as he explains how he captures character

How do you define character? I interpret it as capturing someone's true personality, which has to be the hardest part of shoots – especially if you are photographing people who are not used to being in front of the camera. For this shoot with Jay from a callisthenics group called BarSparta (look them up – it's wild what they can do) I wanted to shoot some action shots but also get the portraits – this is my bread and butter and capturing people's character is why I get hired. I originally had planned to use a large octagonal softbox as my main light, but when we arrived at the location we were stuck with heavy winds which meant we were forced to use smaller modifiers; luckily I love using the beauty dish, especially on tighter portraits. The lighting doesn't necessarily affect the character of the person in the photograph, but it can make them feel uneasy if they aren't used to being shot with equipment. I get around this by explaining what everything does (in basic terms) and it seems to have a calming effect when working with less experienced talent; it wasn't needed on this shoot, but it's good to know. I find posing people when trying to capture character a little awkward – if you are trying to capture their natural character you should avoid getting them to do anything that might be completely alien to them – it will look awkward. I chat all the time to the subject while I am shooting them, I direct them slightly but instead of getting them to do specific poses I get them animated through chatting and telling stories. Some subjects just light up when they are in front of the camera and require little prompting, but sometimes these look too [over the top] – it's all about finding the balance. When it comes to editing I try to keep it natural and realistic, I don't smooth skin although I will remove blemishes and spots. I tend to do an overall tone curve then dodge and burn specific areas to give me the exact look I am after.

Above-inset
Involve the model
I always show people images throughout the shoot. It boosts their confidence on set and they feel more involved

Opposite
Let it flow
Rather than directing his models excessively, Tom Barnes prefers to let their character shine through naturally

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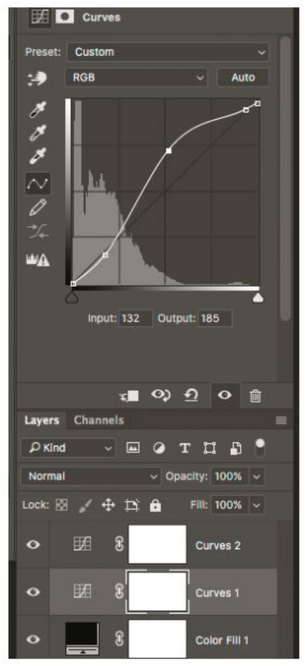


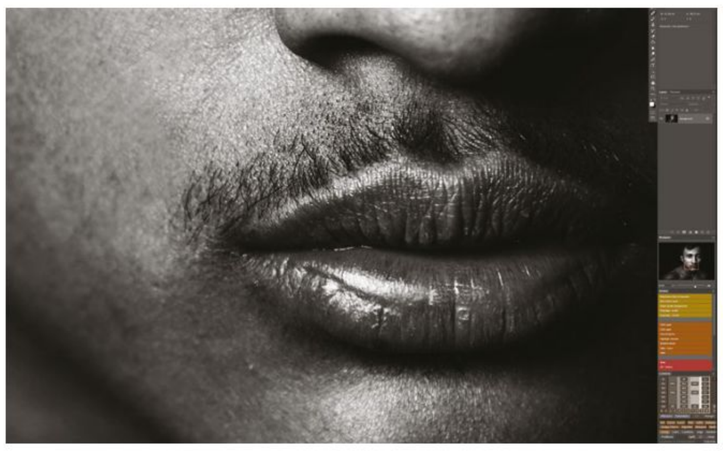
1 Image selection Begin rating your favourite images with one star. Then review these and rate the best as two stars, then review and rate with three stars and so on – by the end you'll have four to five levels of refinement.



2 RAW tweaks I boost the shadows a little, bring back the highlights across the scene and make sure I get an accurate white balance. I will also do lens correction and more general tweaks, before opening as a 16-bit TIFF file.

3 Convert to black and white You can use any one of multiple methods – there are arguments for each of them – but I like to create a new solid fill adjustment layer and adjust the Opacity to choose the level of desaturation – I always use adjustment layers as these are non-destructive and can be adjusted throughout the editing process.





4 Skin I have a skin healing layer set to Lighten and I use the Healing Brush to then heal various blemishes. Set the brush to a hard edge for sharper results. Re-select your target point continually to get relevant textures.



5 Dodge and burn I put this on a separate layer, set to Overlay blend mode. I then paint on to it with a white or black brush to affect the shadows and highlights – use this sparingly as it can look overdone quite easily.



6 High-pass filter I use this in order to give some of the shots an extra bit of punch and micro-contrast – it is effectively oversharpening an image so that it affects tone rather than sharpness.



All images © Tom Barnes

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CREATE STUNNING PORTRAITS INDOORS

Discover the essential tips and kit advice with our guide to the techniques used by the professionals

Shooting portraits indoors, whether it's in a hotel or someone's living room, opens up a wealth of creative possibilities – it can be more exciting than simple studio shoots, and far easier to control than taking pictures outside in the elements.

The lighting options that you'll have on an indoor shoot are endless – from using natural window light and existing room lights, to flash and continuous photographic light. No matter how advanced your kit is and how technical you want to be, you'll be surprised at how effective even the most basic lighting setup is. Indoor portrait photography is the most accessible kind by far – almost everyone will have access to, at the very minimum, a window and some existing room lights. Successful indoor portraits can look anything from soft and natural to edgy and dramatic, and the lighting you choose can transform the feel of a room.

You can incorporate the space itself into your portraits to give them both context and character, or completely hide it with a plain wall or lighting setup for an almost studio-like image. The key is to have the right approach. To get started, professional photographer Jerry Ghionis (jerryghionis.com) says, "You have to understand every room you walk into is just like a studio. The window is a large softbox, the incandescent bulbs on the ceiling are like tungsten flood lights [and so on]. What I encourage photographers to do is walk into a room, turn off all the lights and close the drapes or blinds. Open the drapes slightly at first, and then open them fully to look at the different qualities of light that you have to deal with. Close the drapes, turn on the downlights and so on. Basically, you need to look at what each light source will do independent of each other and then in conjunction with the other. You will soon find a goldmine of ideas in front of you."

Over the next few pages, you'll learn how to harness the power of everything from natural window light, continuous room lights and how to illuminate your shots further with flash. Not only that, but you will also discover creative ways you can capture your portraits within the confines of four walls.

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Left

Give context

When the light is particularly bright you can ask the model to move further into the room, making use of your indoor space to add context to the image

© Maxim Guselnikov

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WORK WITH WINDOWS

Learn how to flatter your model using natural light

The most accessible source of light on an indoor portrait shoot is window light. Although you aren't always guaranteed streaming sunlight, even a cloudy day will produce a workable diffused light that can be used to successfully illuminate your subjects.

The main difference with window light when compared to flash and other continuous light sources is that you can't move or change its strength easily; instead you must move your model while making use of drapes and blinds to direct and control it. Nijaz Turdaliev (500px.com/nijazturdaliev) explains that when shooting with window light, your idea must be built around the light instead of building the light around the idea. There are certain limitations compared to studio photography, but it's certainly not as restrictive as shooting outdoors can be. When using window light, the light will constantly be changing, so having the correct equipment and camera settings is essential.

Maxim Guselnikov (maxguselnikov.com) particularly loves natural light for portrait photography because of its softness, its character and its distribution. "To me the use of natural light is the best way to complement any model, and it suits any indoor location."

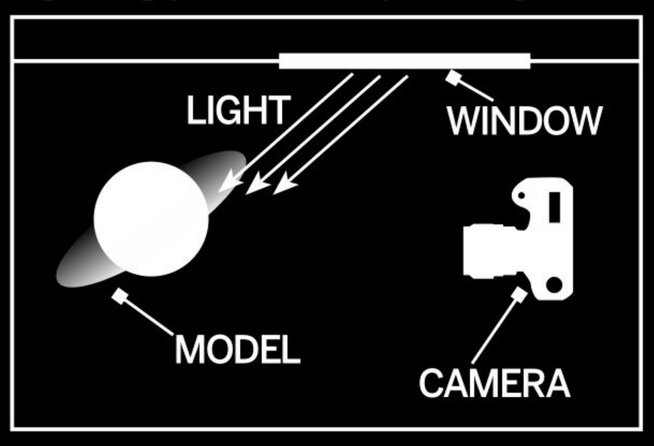
USE YOUR LOCATION

Guselnikov explains that "it's all about the environment." Sometimes an image will lack character and will feel incomplete without the location, so it's important to make use of the colour, atmosphere and mood. "I love to show the connection between the location and subject."

He explains that one of the great things about natural light is that the time of day and weather will convey different moods – on a sunny day you'll get a strong warming light, on a cloudy day the light might be a little cooler and more diffused, and during a sunset you'll get a soft yet directional light with a strong, warm colour temperature. The different qualities of natural light can completely change the image's mood and ambiance. There are a few things to consider when planning

SCULPT A REMBRANDT LIGHTING PATTERN

Harness the power of the window light and create a traditional lighting pattern inspired by the famous artist







© Nijaz Turdaliev



1 Position the model In order to achieve the desired effect, position your model so that they are standing roughly 45 degrees to the window while being slightly back from it.

2 Set up To expose for the lightest side of your subject's face while maintaining the dramatic shadows, use spot metering. You might have to also use negative exposure compensation.

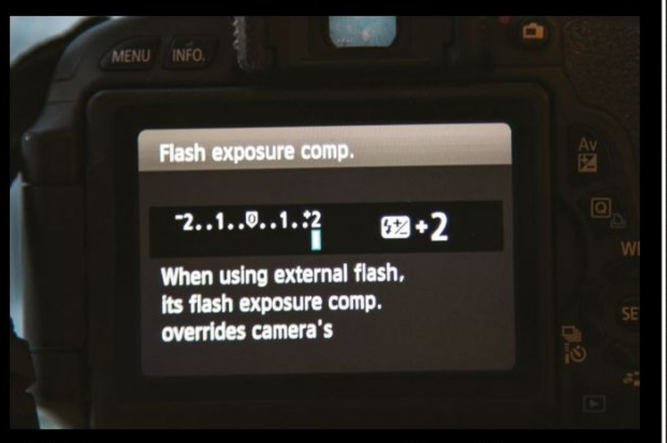
TOP TIP: BLOCK OFF THE LIGHT

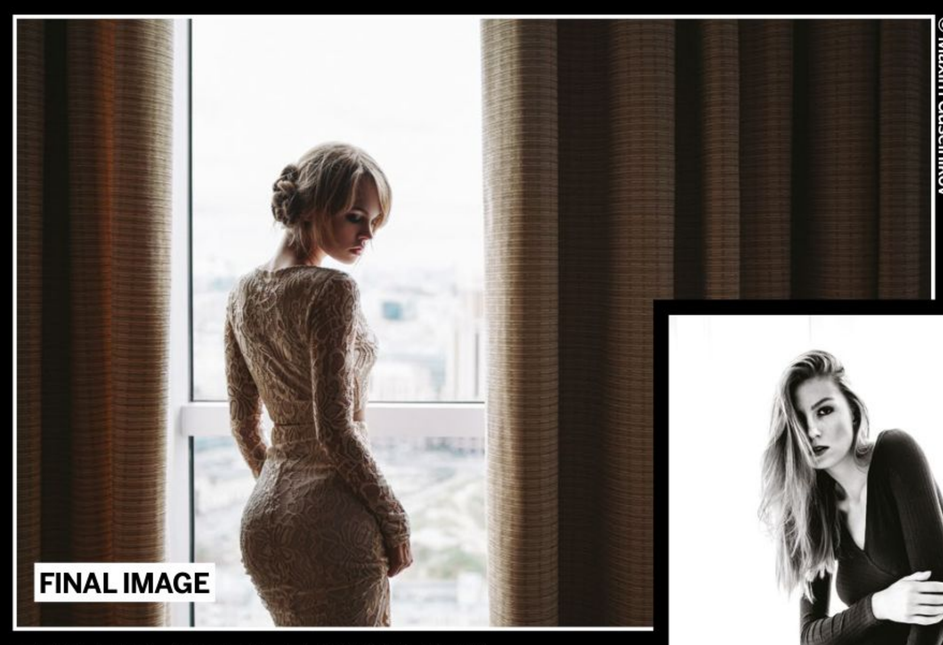
Ideally this effect works best in a reasonably low-light setup, so you may have to use something to block off part of the window.

BACKLIGHT YOUR IMAGES

Use your window as a backlight for creative near-silhouettes







© Maxim Guselnikov



© Matt Osborne

1 Decide where to meter from If you want to leave your model in relative darkness, you'll need to spot meter from the light coming through the window. Metering from the shadow side of your model would lift the exposure too much.

2 Exposure compensation You might find that you now have a silhouette that's more dramatic than you wanted, so use some exposure compensation. Generally, +2 will be more than enough to brighten the exposure sufficiently.

TOP TIP: CREATE HIGH KEY

For a different effect, meter from a side of your model that the window light is not illuminating and consider incorporating a reflector, too.

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WINDOW LIGHT SUCCESS

a window-lit portrait shoot, including "what direction the window is facing (ie. north, south, east, west) and the weather conditions (or more specifically brightness) outside," as Matt Osborne (matthewosbornephotography.co.uk) explains. "On a very overcast day I might work closer to the window to obtain the maximum amount of light, whereas if the day is bright I may work further into the room away from the glass. Another thing to consider is, does the window have a blind or net curtain to help control the light? A net curtain can act as a great diffuser to soften light and a blind can help block out very bright light if needed."

Osborne goes on to say that "a north-facing window creates very soft diffused light, so is perfect for a softbox-effect lighting look. Continuous light such as a window also makes it easy to see how the light falls onto the face, whereas with strobes you normally need to take a photo to see the lighting effect then tweak until perfect." The continuous light that comes from window light is a great tool for portrait photographers, as it is possible to see how the shadows fall on your subject before the shutter is pressed – this makes it far easier to mould the light and shadows to suit the desired effect, without the surprise and uncertainty that can come from using flash.

Another factor that you'll have to consider when shooting portraits with window light is the size of the windows – bigger windows will obviously give you more light. Smaller windows are great for being more creative, but you'll have to bring your subject in closer to the light.

POSITIONING
The model has been angled with her body at 45 degrees to the window, but her face is more angled toward the light, putting more focus on her face – particularly her eyes and lips

APERTURE
Here, f3.5 has been used in order to achieve the correct exposure in relatively low light but without causing the depth of field to become excessively shallow for the composition.

LENS
This stunning portrait was shot on a 50mm lens, creating a beautifully sharp and bright picture

ESSENTIAL PORTRAIT LENSES

Top picks for shooting the perfect portraits



Canon EF 85mm f1.2L II USM The ideal lens for creative portraiture – it's perfect for shooting in low-light situations and the extremely wide aperture means you'll be able to shoot stunning portraits with beautiful bokeh.



Nikon AF-S Nikkor 58mm f1.4G A fast, bright prime lens designed to perform best at its maximum aperture with a smooth bokeh – ideal for portraiture and low-light scenes.



Canon EF 24-105mm f3.5-5.6 IS STM This zoom lens will allow for more flexibility in your captures while providing top-quality results. The adaptability will enable you to make the most of your indoor space.

© Nijaz Turdaliev

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USE FIXED LIGHTING

Create atmospheric portraits by using lights already in the room

It probably wouldn't be wrong to assume that every room and indoor location you are likely to host a shoot in will have existing room lights on the ceiling or the walls, and there might even be some free-standing lamps. Often room lights with tungsten light bulbs or florescent lights are scoffed at by photographers because of their tendency to cause unwanted colour casts in shots, however according to Ghionis, they "can create mood and drama, and they can add texture, depth and dimension" to a portrait.

"The reason that I do love using existing light so much and just manipulating it is because you will find a different lighting setup in every location," explains Ghionis. "If I were to use the same light sources on every job then all of my work would start looking the same."

Fixed room lights obviously can't be moved and will rarely be dimmable, so keeping an eye on the shadows on your model's face is essential. Like window light, the benefit of using fixed room lights is that you'll be able to see exactly where shadows fall before firing the shutter. Down lights can potentially create very unflattering shadows on a subject's face, for example – use a reflector to fill them or alter the model's pose.

An important thing for Ghionis is to ensure that the skin tones of the model look real while not getting too hung up on the colour temperature as a whole. "I am not at all concerned with mixing lights that have different temperatures in a single image," says Ghionis. "Mixed lighting is often referred to in a negative way. But there really is no right or wrong – it is all just the subjective perspective of the artist. I love contrasting tones and colours in an image because they help amplify each other. For example, a warm light source can look even warmer if there is a cool tone to complement it."

Using solely room lights will generally create moody shots, but sometimes mixing them with natural light can create a nice ambience while maintaining the atmosphere and feel of the scene. Guselnikov often uses window light as his main light and uses ambient light as a rim light. He explains that the "rim light helps to separate the subject from the background and also the mixing of light temperatures usually creates a really good ambiance."

THINK ABOUT COMPOSITION

Some photographers prefer to maintain some mystery in their imagery by purposefully hiding their light source. However, when using fixed room lights, including the light source in the frame can add a whole new dimension to the scene – making it feel more real and true to life.

All images © Jerry Ghionis

Above
Rich colours
Making the most out of existing room lights can help you to create really striking effects that certainly wouldn't have been possible or easy to re-create with flash

Right
Striking composition
You can incorporate the room lights into the composition for a really interesting effect

Far-right
A mix
In this shot Ghionis has combined the light from the fixed wall lights and candles on the table for a very warm, but atmospheric shot



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MAINTAIN THE ATMOSPHERE

Pro shooter Jerry Ghionis shares his tips on shooting atmospheric low-light portraits indoors



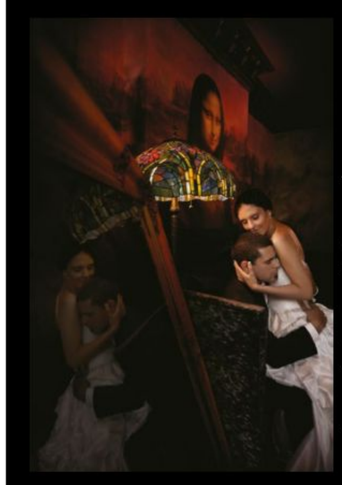
CREATE A MOODY REFLECTION

The light coming through a window can not only illuminate your subject, but you can also use the window pane itself to create a reflection.



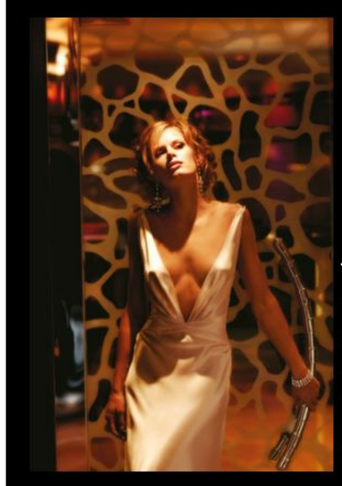
ADD DRAMA

If you are in a location that has an overhead down light that is close to the wall, you can use it to create a very dramatic image. By posing your subject's face up towards the light, you will amplify their cheekbones and jawline.



POSE FOR THE LIGHT

The direction of an existing light source will often give you an idea for a pose. In this example, I wanted to use the lamp but needed an excuse for the bride to lean forward [to get] the light on her. By having her embrace the groom, I could pose her into the perfect position.



BE AWARE OF THE SHADOWS

When you are using an overhead light, you will need to tilt the face up enough so that the shadow created by your subject's nose doesn't cross the line of her lip.



ENSURE YOUR SUBJECT IS BRIGHT

Typically, you want the brightest part of the image to be your subject, so keep this in mind when incorporating the light source in the frame.



USE CANDLELIGHT

When using candles as your light source, the light is coming from below the subject's face – not a good angle for lighting a subject. Get them to lean forward so that they are as parallel as possible with the light source.





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© Laura Peckauskiene, Model: Akvile Zirgulyte

CONTINUOUS LIGHTS

Another option is to use continuous LED photography lights. The benefit of these is that you can see their effect on the subject before firing the shutter. They have been specifically designed for photography, and you have complete control over their power and positioning.

EMBRACE FLASH

Add another dimension to your portrait shoot

If you want to take more control of your indoor shoot, you may want to incorporate flash into your setup. There are two main ways of doing this, either by completely overpowering any ambient light with flash – darkening the background – or by balancing both flash and ambient light for a more atmospheric and contextual shot.

You can either use simple speedlights or studio strobes. Professional wedding photographer Laura Pe□kauskien□ (laurapeckauskiene.com) explains that "I do not use big strobes, because with speedlights I'm more mobile and I can quickly and easily change position." Laura has used flash to capture very striking images of her model that have completely isolated her from the scene and background.

Pro shooter Clay Cook (claycookphotography.com) favours the balancing approach, "First, always consider the available light and meter lighting for the environment. Using a slow shutter speed in dark situations is an important facet of my work. I always incorporate ambiance for more natural and realistic portraiture. Keep in mind, shutter speed only controls ambient light and aperture controls artificial light (and some ambient), therefore you have the ability to bring up the exposure of the ambient light without altering the flash using shutter speed. Up the ambiance, then create drama with the artificial light source. You want the strobe to mimic the look of natural light. In order to keep the image sharp while using a slow shutter speed, use a sturdy tripod and make sure the subject remains somewhat still."

When opting for the balancing approach you may end up with multiple light sources that can cause problems with regards to the white balance of your image. Cook states, "You don't want to be stuck in situations with fluorescent, daylight and tungsten light all combined in one composition. But, if you're in a tough scenario, switch the white balance to Daylight or bring in a custom Kelvin that makes the entire image warm. Then, in post- processing, balance all the lighting to taste."

There can be a few problems that you'll encounter when using speedlights or studio strobes indoors. "When using artificial light in an ambient indoors scenario, the artificial lighting can get over-saturated, over-applied and look completely placed," explains Clay.

Above

Striking mono

A beauty dish was positioned to the left of the camera at a 45-degree angle above the model, with a black reflector behind her. The camera was set to 1/125s, f6.3, ISO 100

Opposite-left

Considered lighting

Similarly, this portrait was taken with the beauty dish to the left of the camera at a 45-degree angle above the model. The camera was set to 1/125secs, f5 with an ISO of 100

MODIFY YOUR FLASH

Achieve the effect you want with the right choice



Snoot
Use a snoot to control the direction and size of the beam of light for creating dramatic, low-key portraits.



Beauty dish
These can be ideal for portraiture. The light produced by a beauty dish has quite a rapid fall off, which helps to sculpt the shadows on the subject's face and show texture in their skin.



Gobo
Coming in different designs for various effects, Gobos can help you to make your portraits far more creative. A popular choice is one that creates the effect of light shining through blinds.

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© Laura Peckauskiene, Model: Akvile Zirgulyte



© Clay Cook

"Keep the light natural, keep it soft and the rest will fall into place."

Another method of using flash indoors involves bouncing it off of a surface in order to diffuse it and create a softer light than you'd get from direct flash. "The most important facet of bouncing light is to make sure there is zero colour cast from the ceiling or material you're bouncing into. If done correctly, bounced light indoors can be extremely beautiful and natural," explains Clay Cook.

Osborne says that light is a big part of his photography. "I often use strobes to either mimic daylight or to enhance it. Continuous light may give me an idea, then I increase light levels in the same pattern of light using strobes so I can use a lower ISO or faster shutter speed. Mixing different light sources can be used to creative effect, mixing sources of light with different colour. For example, cooler blue daylight next to warmer tungsten room lights."

Left

Subtle lighting

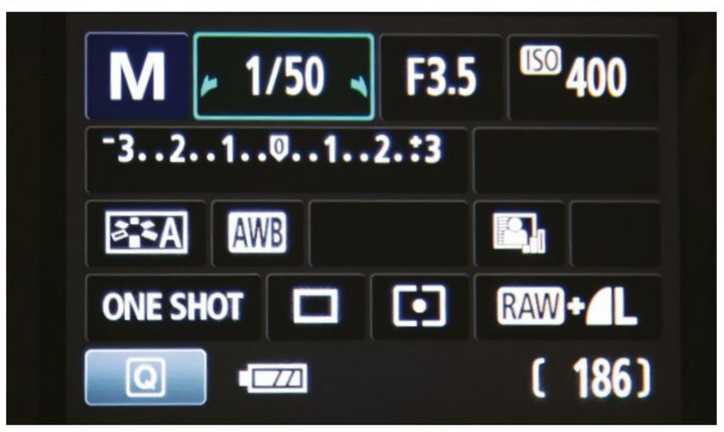
Here Cook has very delicately balanced the lighting to perfectly suit the location. The image was taken at 1/4 secs at f4

BALANCE FLASH

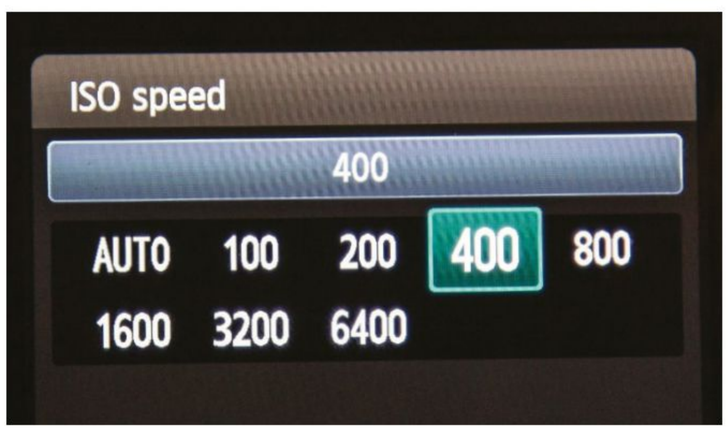
Effectively balance flash with ambient lighting



1 Beware of colour temperature If you are shooting with existing room lights, you may want to add a CTO gel to your flash to match the tungsten glow of the fixed lighting. This will harmonise your image's colour temperature.



2 Drag the shutter If you set your shutter speed too fast, then you will underexpose the ambient light. In order to maintain the ambience in your shot, slow the shutter down and open the aperture wide.



3 Play with the ISO If you are suffering from motion blur or ghosting because of a slow shutter speed, increase the ISO in order to use a faster shutter speed – but don't go beyond the maximum sync speed.

BOUNCE FLASH

Distribute the light from your flash by bouncing it



1 Diffuse it Bouncing flash will help to spread the light over a larger area than if you were firing it directly. Using the attached diffuser or an additional plastic diffuser will help to soften the light further.



2 Decide on an angle Fire the flash at around 45 degrees upwards so that some light is feathered directly towards your subject and some light is bounced off the ceiling above them.



© Clay Cook

EVEN LIGHT

"For their final issue, we photographed the team of Kentucky-based *NFocus Magazine* in a glamorous fashion, but in the midst of their real lifestyle. This is a perfect example of one light simply bounced off a white ceiling.

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COMPOSE CREATIVELY

Think outside the box for better results

An indoor portrait shoot that doesn't involve a studio can enable you to be considerably more creative with your composition and framing; first because of the varying lighting setups you can use, but also by virtue of the environment that you find yourself in. Portrait and wedding photographers often make creative use of items including mirrors, windows and door frames – and even the furniture in a room can help to completely transform an image into an artistic masterpiece.

"Every physical object, every texture, every reflection can be a trigger to spark your creative process, and it doesn't have to be the obvious choices," explains Ghionis. "For example, a mirror is an obvious reflective surface, but there are many objects that will also create a reflection with a result that is much more unique. I always ask myself, 'If MacGyver were a photographer, what would he do?' It helps me think more creatively."

Osborne says that in order to capture creative imagery you must use the location as part of the image as much as possible, especially if it's interesting. Your timing will also affect and enhance your creativity.

He says, "You can literally use every corner of the room and use the same room at different times of the day to see how the light changes as the Sun moves. The options really are endless. Indoor portraits are especially great during winter months when it is potentially cold outside and also for evening shoots after dark." Get into the habit of thinking about the different ways that you can use various elements of an environment to transform the portraits you are taking into something more intriguing and you will be on the path to creating truly impressive indoor portraits.

Top

Shadow play

Position the model so that shadows from the windows creatively fall into the scene

Right

Use reflections

Ghionis' work frequently makes use of reflections in order to convey a sense of mystery and drama

© Jerry Ghionis

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ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR OUTDOOR PORTRAITS

Follow our hands-on guide and discover how to get professional-looking results every time

Although there's something magical about shooting portraits in natural light, there's no need to wait for a sunny day to get started. Flattering results can be achieved in all conditions with the right kit and a bit of know-how, which makes the genre perfect if you don't have access to a studio. Equipment needn't be complex either; there's a myriad different effects to be accomplished simply by adding a flashgun and reflector into your kitbag.

Over the next few pages, discover the tips you need to shoot professional portraits whether you're in the city or the country. We'll start by covering the use of natural light alone, before exploring how the time of day and angle of the Sun can affect the outcome of a shot. Whether you're using flash, the ambient light available or even a balance of the two, learn how to use lighting on location with our step-by-step advice and transform your captures into something even more special.

While the great advantage to outdoor portraits is that they can be shot almost anywhere, you still need to understand how to work with your location so that you avoid distractions and unsightly backgrounds.

Once you've truly mastered the craft of lighting, move onto something that's a little more creative and follow our tutorial on using lens flare to create dreamy, hazy photos. Of course, there are no set rules to follow, but a few basic pointers should set your imagination running with ideas to try.

If you've got a willing model, read on and discover how to create natural, flattering portraits with ease. From balancing light sources to controlling depth of field, we've got the ultimate guide for you.

Left

Ambient perfection

Capturing great people shots outside isn't always easy, but with the right techniques stunning results can be achieved

©Maxim Guselnikov

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WORK WITH NATURAL LIGHT

Learn to use ambient light like a pro portrait photographer

Getting good results in natural light can seem like a game of luck, but learning how to manipulate sunlight will have a huge impact on the success of your final imagery. Finding or creating a flattering light is central for portraiture and, as with all photography, is determined by the direction, quantity and position of the light source – in this case sunlight – in relation to your model.

You can't always control timings when you're working collaboratively, but this should be one of your first points of consideration when planning any shoot outside. Generally, it's best to avoid the high midday Sun and the stark, contrasting shadows it causes, instead opting for mid-morning or afternoon. In bright daylight, search for areas of subtle shade coverage under buildings or foliage, or use props such as hats to shield the model's eyes and avoid squinting.

Out in the field lighting conditions can be fleeting, but no matter what the scenario, using a reflector is a guaranteed way to fill in shadows and capture smooth, even skin tones. Like most tools, reflectors come in all shapes, sizes and, importantly, colours, each of which are suited to different lighting conditions and the results you want to achieve. For example, a white coating works well in midday Sun, and when placed close to the subject's face bounces light without a colour cast. Silver is also neutral, yet much more reflective, making it the ideal option in low lighting or overcast conditions. Conversely, a gold side is more flattering when used in the shade, as it casts a stronger, warmer glow.

Using lighting modifiers requires a certain level of experimentation, so always move the reflector around your model until you start to see the effect, tilting it until you find the perfect position. Having an assistant on hand makes this process easier, but there's no harm in asking the model to hold the reflector in place if it doesn't interfere with the composition in any way.

Remember that working in natural light is all about adapting to the conditions at hand, and that each setup will be slightly different. While your ultimate goal is always to achieve a soft and even skin tone, the eyes should still be the clear and sharp focal point. When you have determined the best-available lighting solution, use it to effectively shape, enhance and add form to your particular subject.

PERFECT COLOUR TEMPERATURE

Using a white balance filter such as the ExpoDisc will help you to measure the natural light colour, render skin tones accurately and save time at the editing stage.



© Florian Weiler

Right
Towards the Sun
Backlighting works to highlight the outline of your subject and distinguishes them from the backdrop

TIME YOUR SHOOT Remember that the quality of natural light varies throughout the day



© Suzy Mead

Early captures Morning light is softer than harsh daylight because of the low Sun angle, and can provide a glow to your model's skin. Dawn light is cooler than sunset; arrive early to set up for sunrise (**portraitsbysuzy.com**).



© Ilia Razorenov (500px.com/zepra)

Midday timing The Sun is at its highest and most direct point, casting strong shadows across your model's face without a reflector. A cloudy sky will diffuse direct sunlight, resulting in a more flat but even illumination.



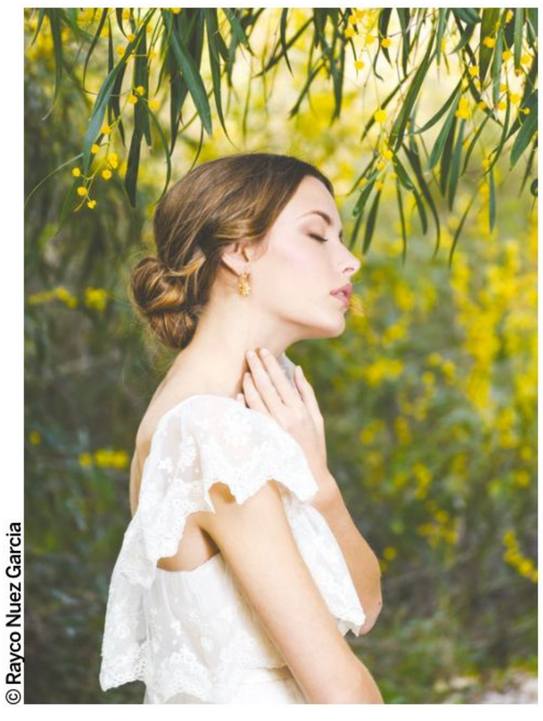
© Suzy Mead

End of day When the Sun approaches the horizon, the light again becomes more flattering and backlighting is much easier to achieve. The light is often particularly warm at this time of day.

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OVERCOME STRONG AMBIENT LIGHT

Avoid difficult exposures with these simple posing tips



© Rayco Nuez Garcia

Find areas of open shade When working in harsh sunlight, try to find areas that are partially shaded. This enables you to achieve a more evenly lit exposure, but open shade also often offers useful framing devices, as shown here.



© Rayco Nuez Garcia

Shoot facing the Sun It can be tempting to use the Sun to light your model, but it's much better to have the Sun behind the subject so they won't start squinting. Overexpose slightly and/or use a reflector to balance out the exposure.

WORK BETTER WITH A REFLECTOR

Use these flexible accessories to overcome even the most challenging lighting situations



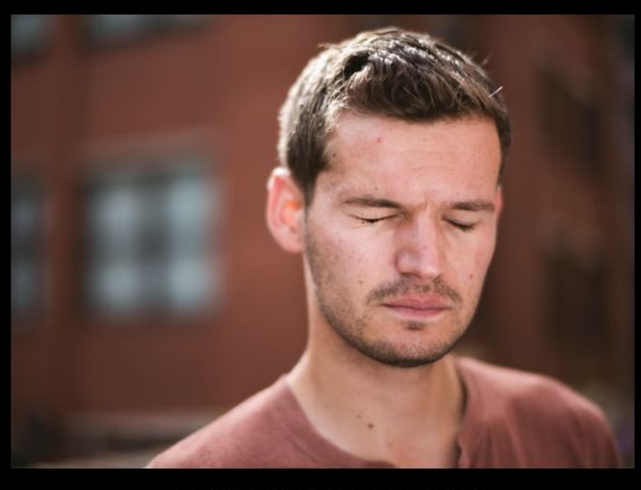
WITHOUT A REFLECTOR
With your model backlit, you need to overexpose. This approach can work fine, but the model's skin tones aren't rendered as well and the rim lighting effect is lost.



WITH A SILVER REFLECTOR
This enables a more balanced exposure to be created. In this example, the rim light effect on the subject's hair is more distinct and there's a catchlight in the eyes.



DEAL WITH DIFFICULT SHADOWS
If your model is posed on the ground, shadows can form under the chin and the jawline. Placing a fairly large reflector directly underneath them solves this.



ANGLE IT CAREFULLY
From your perspective as the photographer, it can be hard to appreciate how bright a reflector can be for the subject. Angle it carefully so as not to hurt their eyes.

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USE LIGHTING ON LOCATION

Learn to illuminate portraits with ease no matter where you are

Despite the advanced metering systems found in most modern cameras, even the best models can falter when exposing tricky situations, particularly if there's a big difference in brightness between your model and the background. Introducing flash is a great way to overcome this problem – illuminating faces in the foreground while ensuring that the surroundings remain correctly exposed.

Aside from balancing exposure, adding in artificial light can also inject contrast into your portraits, and though metering might seem complex, the process is fairly simple once you learn the fundamental principles.

You'll need to decide between using a speedlight or portable flash unit, depending on your budget and shoot requirements. Speedlights aren't as powerful as their stand-alone counterparts, but are less expensive and more portable, so make a worthy choice for most applications. Of course, it's how you use the kit that really counts, and you can modify the flash impact either by adjusting its power or altering the distance between it and your model. Bear in mind that flash light falls off very quickly, so when positioning your light sources, it's best to keep them close to your subject and compose the shot so that they're just out of the frame.

When using fill-in flash to illuminate your model in dull weather, try bouncing the light off a white reflector to diffuse and soften it. If you're using strobe lighting, using one umbrella or softbox positioned away from the camera will result in similar effects.

Using flash as a fill-in light is not only a good technique to employ when your model is poorly lit, but also when the ambient conditions are

WORK WITH COLOUR

Attaching a coloured gel to your flashgun is a simple way to achieve a different lighting effect. You can also set the White Balance to a custom setting, with or without a gel.



© Ostrovskaya Anastasiya (www.photostrana.jp)

Opposite
Subject separation
Combine the outdoor lighting with flash to make your model stand out from the rest of the scene

Right
Fix dim lighting
A speedlight can be used simply to illuminate your model in low-light environments and conditions

BALANCE ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

How to effectively complement the ambient light with a flashgun



1 Set the camera Use manual mode and a low ISO of around 200. Determine and set the exposure for the background light by using your camera's in-built meter.



2 Expose the background Take a test shot for the natural light and tweak the shutter speed until you're happy. If in doubt, it's best to underexpose the ambient light a little bit.



3 Position the flash Mount the speedlight onto the camera's hot shoe, or attach it to a stand if you want to use it off-camera. Use manual mode and 1/4 power to start with.



4 Test and tweak The light intensity will be determined by subject distance and flash output. If the result is too bright, move the speedlight further away or reduce its power.



5 Modify the light Once you've found the optimum flash power, experiment with the shot by introducing light modifiers. For example, add a softbox to your speedlight.



6 Experiment with direction Generally, results are more natural when the flash is mounted off-camera, rather than straight on the hot shoe.

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© Giovanni Napuli

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bright and you want to overpower the Sun to avoid intense shadows and hot spots. It's best to work in manual mode, setting the shutter to the maximum flash sync speed your DSLR is capable of, which is probably around 1/250sec. Take a meter reading for the ambient light, then start by setting the flash at around two stops higher.

Flash is an effective tool, but the light quality can appear harsh when used on its own. After mastering the overall exposure on a shoot, always aim to refine your technique by experimenting with reflectors, softboxes and diffusers. You can of course get even more creative by introducing another speedlight into your lighting setup, which will boost the levels of flash available to you and enable you to create dimension by using multiple lights.

Right
Overpower the Sun
Try dialling down the ambient exposure and using flash as the dominant light source in the scene

PORTABLE FLASH EXPOSED

Consider the pros and cons of using larger light units and explore what's on offer

Portable flash units are powered by a large battery pack, which makes their light output more powerful and enables very fast recycling times. Of course, there are trade-offs to this added power, and their large size makes them less portable, more of a hassle to set up and largely much more of an investment.

If you're new to artificial lighting you'll probably find it more cost-efficient to buy a package, which could include lighting heads, stands, modifiers and even battery packs in the price. Lightweight heads are ideal for location shoots, but the product you choose should still be rugged enough to withstand the elements. Basic kits can start from around £320 (approx $460), for example Interfit's ProFlash One Eighty Kit, which achieves shutter speeds up to 1/8000 second and 900 full-power flashes between charges. Although spending more cash doesn't guarantee better results, always be sure to invest in a setup that will grow with you.



© Florian Weiler

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© Ostrovskaya Anastasiya

USE REFLECTIONS

Incorporate this very helpful compositional aid

Most settings, particularly those in an urban environment, have access to a wealth of reflective surfaces. Including the reflection of a model in a shop window or car mirror, for example, can really add visual interest to an otherwise conventional shot. If your aim is to capture the model looking directly at their reflection, ensure you choose a shooting angle that excludes you from also being reflected in the frame. Alternatively, try shooting your subject straight on. Autofocus often struggles on glass and metallic surfaces, so switch to manual mode if your lens is hunting.



© Ostrovskaya Anastasiya

SOLVE LOCATION PROBLEMS

Work with the environment for the best possible results

It's not always possible to scout locations beforehand, but professional photographers can conjure striking portraits in even the most uninspiring of places. While shooting outdoors has its advantages, you generally have much less control over the ambient conditions compared to a studio, and you'll need to be adaptable to any environment you're faced with. Exposing effectively should be the first priority, followed by tailoring the composition and your model's stance to avoid any distracting elements.

When you meter the scene, understanding which mode to use will ensure your exposure is accurate for the situation at hand. Most modern DSLRs are equipped with average, spot and centre-weighted options, although they're named slightly differently between brands. The commonly used Matrix-metering mode, called Evaluative on Canon models, is suitable for many scenes, as it takes an average of the brightness measurements across the frame. It won't always record the scene how you'd like though, for example greatly underexposing backlit portraits.

In scenes of high contrast, it's worth adopting a manual method so that you can specifically choose which area to expose for. For example, spot or partial metering is effective when the subject's face is much brighter than the rest of the frame. Although it takes a fair bit of practice to get to grips with manual scene metering, the added time will pay off when less images are poorly exposed.

Of course, it's worth remembering that while your DSLR's meter system is advanced, it's certainly not perfect, and there are times when you still might need to overrule it to achieve your desired outcome.

If you are keen to stay within the various automatic modes however, you should use exposure compensation when it's necessary to capture a frame that's darker or lighter than the recommended exposure. This feature is handy when the background is much brighter than your subject, for example an overcast sky or setting Sun. The camera factors in these bright areas to produce an average reading that is more than likely to underexpose the model, but by dialling in several stops of positive exposure you can overcome this problem.

The ultimate location tip of all, though, is to find the best light and put your subject in it.

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EXPOSE EFFECTIVELY

Use aperture priority mode and meter correctly even in strong backlight



1 Prep the camera Activate the LCD screen and histogram. In aperture priority mode, select centre-weighted metering to measure the light intensity from the middle of the frame.



2 Meter the face Ensure the central AF point is positioned over your model, half-press the shutter to meter the frame and press the AE lock button to retain the setting.



3 Add in compensation Compose the frame, positioning the Sun directly behind the model's head. Dial in several positive stops of exposure compensation.

AVOID DISTRACTING BACKDROPS

Follow these simple steps to eliminate unsightly elements from the frame



1 Choose your lens A longer focal length, such as 85mm, will work to compress the perspective of the background. A fast prime lens with a wide maximum aperture is ideal.



2 Set the aperture In aperture priority mode, take a test shot at your lens' widest aperture. If the depth of field is too shallow, close down the aperture slightly.



3 Create some distance The further the subject is from the background, the more out of focus it will be. Altering the camera position slightly can also make a big difference.



USING KIT LENSES

It's possible to achieve attractive background blur without a specialist wide-aperture lens to hand, as depth of field becomes limited at longer focal lengths. Use lenses at their longest reach and the widest aperture.

EXPOSE EFFECTIVELY

© Florian Weiler



AVOID DISTRACTING BACKDROPS

Opposite
Matrix metering
This mode is the easiest to use and provides a good starting point

Left
Use backlighting
A tight composition was chosen to block the majority of the Sun and produce rim lighting

Above
Subject separation
A 200mm lens and aperture of f5.6 has separated the model from the foliage

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GET CREATIVE

Be daring in your approach and take your shots up a level with these ideas

It can be a satisfying feeling to capture a portrait that's well-exposed according to your camera, but the real fun comes when you break the rules and start to play around with your setting choices.

In the same way that backlit images require you to deliberately overexpose a 'correctly' metered image, silhouettes can be thought of in the opposite way. These shots capture just the profile of your model, and require a negative exposure compensation to throw them into shadow. Although this dynamic effect is fairly straightforward to create, it's only possible when your subject is positioned against a brighter background, such as a vibrant sunset. You'll need to choose aperture priority mode, start with a low ISO of around 200 and a narrower aperture than for most portraiture, such as f8. Shoot at an upwards angle to isolate the model from the scenery behind them, and bear in mind that the more sky you include in the shot, generally the less exposure compensation you'll need.

As with exposure, shutter speed can also be intentionally altered to garner portraits that stand out from the crowd. For example, by asking your model to stand as still as possible, switching to shutter priority and choosing a relatively slow value such as 1/15sec, you'll be able to freeze them while capturing a moving scene behind them. This could be the perfect way to portray a bustling city background, for example, but be prepared for the possibility of your subject appearing less than pin-sharp.

Being constantly on the lookout for new projects and ideas keeps your portraits fresh and inspired and improves your overall technique as a consequence.

AVOID AWKWARD POSES

It's important to give regular encouragement so that your subjects relax when modelling for you, but don't be afraid to change a pose if it doesn't look right.



© Giovanni Napuli

Right
Include flare
Lens flare is often unwanted, but it can add drama and impact to portraits

WORK WITH THE SUN

Professional photographer Dave Kai-Piper reveals his tips



© Dave Kai-Piper

"The Sun can be a very powerful tool when used to create a sense of mood. There have been loads of times that I have gotten up super early to use the sunlight. During the day the type of light we get from the Sun will change, just as it does at different times of the year. Shooting with a super-low winter Sun can really be amazing when you want those long, drawn-out shadows or looking for a nice harsh contrast," says Kai-Piper.

"I use a few filters as a rule whenever I am shooting... I use the LEE Filters Matte box. The new Soft Grad ND filters are really great at adding in contrast to control how much flare there is across an image, too."

Kai-Piper explains that it's important to be careful with composition. "Find ways to filter the Sun's rays though trees, signposts or having it just in the edge of frame. If you're going to have the whole Sun in the shot be very careful. Don't use dirty glass, this will only leave you with hours of work in post-production as the light glancing across the lens will catch and look nasty."

www.ideasandimages.co.uk

USE APERTURE EFFECTIVELY

"Shooting wide open is usually a good idea," explains Kai-Piper. Essentially, the wider you can go, the better. Even at f4 or f5.6, overexposed highlights will not look nearly as good as they do at f1.4 or f1.8. On a 50mm, 35mm or 24mm lens you will find you still have sufficient depth of field, even at these ultra-wide apertures.



Above and left
Open up
Overexposed highlights look far better at very wide apertures

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MASTER THE ART OF BACKLIT PORTRAITS

Learn how to create dramatic and creative images when you shoot into the Sun

Portraits are one of photography's biggest challenges, because they involve so many different considerations. Of course, one of these is the lighting you are working with: we all know that a stunning image has so much to do with the lighting used, but it's important to get to grips with working consciously and deliberately with specific types of light. This is perhaps particularly true when it comes to portraits, precisely because you need to be able to free yourself up to interact successfully with the subject, helping to guide them in terms of posing and expression.

Backlighting is one of the most beautiful and striking manifestations of light, providing you as the photographer with many different opportunities to create artistic and creative images. It is not without its challenges, of course – depending on the precise effects that you are seeking to achieve.

Over the next few pages, you'll discover how to create dramatic portraits using backlight as your key inspiration – from working in the studio to going out on location, and from working with natural light to using flash. As well as the all-important shooting techniques, you will also discover how some judicious editing can make a big difference to your final results.

Right
Beautiful backlight
Working with backlighting can be challenging, but you can produce incredible results
© Greta Tuckute



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WORK WITH THE SUN

Master this essential skill for great backlit portraits

Shooting into the Sun creates challenges aplenty – so some photographers avoid it wherever possible. However, it can produce incredible results for portraits, as Greta Tuckute (**www.gretatu.com**) explains.

"If you can control natural backlighting, it provides an excellent opportunity for vivid and dramatic portraits. The model will not have to squint because of strong Sunlight, and harsh and unflattering shadows on the model's face are avoided. Sun-rays and strong background illumination gives portraits an artistic quality without using any studio lighting or flash."

The precise way in which you use the Sun within the composition makes a significant difference to the type of effect that you will able to achieve. "It is essential to choose where in your frame you want to position the Sun", says Tuckute. "Basically, there are three options: The Sun behind the model, outside the frame or in the actual shot. The composition and framing of the Sun within your shot depends entirely on the circumstances, time of the day, location, and what kind of portraiture style you want.

"A good place to start is trying to place the Sun just outside the frame or partly behind the model. By keeping the majority of direct Sunlight out of the frame, you avoid too much light and impossible autofocus. Moreover,



© Greta Tuckute

SUN PARTLY OBSCURED BEHIND MODEL

TIME IT RIGHT

Greta Tuckute explains why the time of day is so important

"The golden hour – the first or last hour of Sunlight during the day – is an optimal time period for practising backlit portraiture. The lack of very intense Sunlight makes the shot technically easier and gives a more controlled condition for placing lens flares in the shot. In addition, it is simple to obtain a golden rim around your subject.

"Nevertheless, it is not necessary to wait for the golden hour to create an illuminated outline of your subject. Find an angle that illuminates the model's face without any sharp shadows – often the Sun will be partly behind the model. Make sure to expose for the subject's face, and minimise the amount of direct Sun entering the lens."



© Greta Tuckute

Midday Sun
This portrait was shot in the middle of the day with an intense Sun. The Sun is placed partly behind the model on the right side of the photograph and partly outside the frame. This position of the Sun gives a soft illumination of the model's face.



© Greta Tuckute

Golden-hour Sun
The golden hour gives ideal conditions for shooting captivating summer portraits with powerful lighting.

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© Greta Tuckute

when the Sun is partly behind the model, rays of light will illuminate the face of the model in a magical manner.

"Another alternative is to place the Sun entirely outside of the frame. This is favourable if the Sun is high in the sky, and you want to create dramatic portraits with high contrast. By placing the model in front of a building or in a room with ceiling windows, it is possible to avoid overexposing the background.

"The technically most difficult position of the Sun is in the frame itself. The Sun easily burns out the image, so it is advantageous to shoot these portraits during Sunrise or Sunset."

Inevitably, though, there are technical challenges created by shooting with the Sun shining into your lens so directly. "One of the most challenging aspects of a successful backlit portrait is the focus of the camera", says Tuckute. "Frequently the autofocus on your camera will not work at all. You might look in the viewfinder just to realise you are completely blinded, and cannot see the subject. Either ask the model to block the Sun and get the autofocus right in order to shift to manual focus afterwards, or simply try to adjust the focus manually at an object and keep a fixed distance to the model."

The exposure can also be difficult to perfect. Tuckute recommends shooting with a wide aperture, no smaller than f5.6, and using spot metering or exposure compensation to take control. "It can be useful to use the light spot metering of the camera by pointing at your subject to get an idea of a correct shutter speed in manual settings.

"When using auto exposure, it is almost always necessary to set the exposure on the camera to at least +1: by using auto exposure, it is almost impossible to get the exposure correct on more than a couple of images in a row. Always shoot in RAW to have the best post-processing possibilities. A completely correct exposure is not crucial, but lens flares, Sun rays and golden outlines are something to base your selection on. The exposure can be adjusted and the flares intensified with some simple Photoshop work."

WORK WITH APERTURE

The f-stop is a vital consideration when shooting with backlighting

The way backlighting is rendered in your images depends on the aperture you use. If you select a wide aperture, the backlight will have a pleasingly soft appearance, but you may struggle to avoid overexposure. A narrow aperture introduces diffraction and potentially a Sunstar effect.



Wide open Dave Kai Piper shot this image on a Fujifilm X-Pro 2, with his XF35mm lens wide open at f1.4. The backlighting is soft and diffuse.



Mid-range With a XF16-55mm lens at 34mm (51mm equivalent) stopped down to f5.6, the light no longer has quite the same appealingly soft glow as before.



Stopped down With the same zoom lens now at 33mm (50mm equivalent) and stopped down to f22, a slight Sunstar effect has now formed on the motorcycle.

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ENHANCE THE EFFECT

Use backlighting to create portraits with a very artistic feel

Because backlighting is so inherently striking, you will find that it presents many different possibilities for creative images. Flare is an optical by-product that photographers often strive to avoid much of the time, but it can be used to add drama and interest to your backlit portraits.

"Lens flares and light rays can add a fascinating dimension to your portrait", says Greta Tuckute. "It is difficult to control the position of the light rays in the shot, but certain circumstances and methods makes the process easier.

"First, it is essential to avoid an open sky behind your subject. This burns out the background and does not provide [the right conditions] to make the Sun rays visible. Second, filtering of light can be beneficial. Avoid a harsh look by filtering the light through a window, trees, foliage or an artificial filter."

Precisely because controlling the effect of flare in your photos is problematic when working with natural light, some photographers choose to create a similar effect by using a glass prism, or similar object, to produce a comparable result. "When reflecting the light in glass, a prism or a crystal, you can create some interesting light rays that are possible to capture in your shot", says Tuckute.

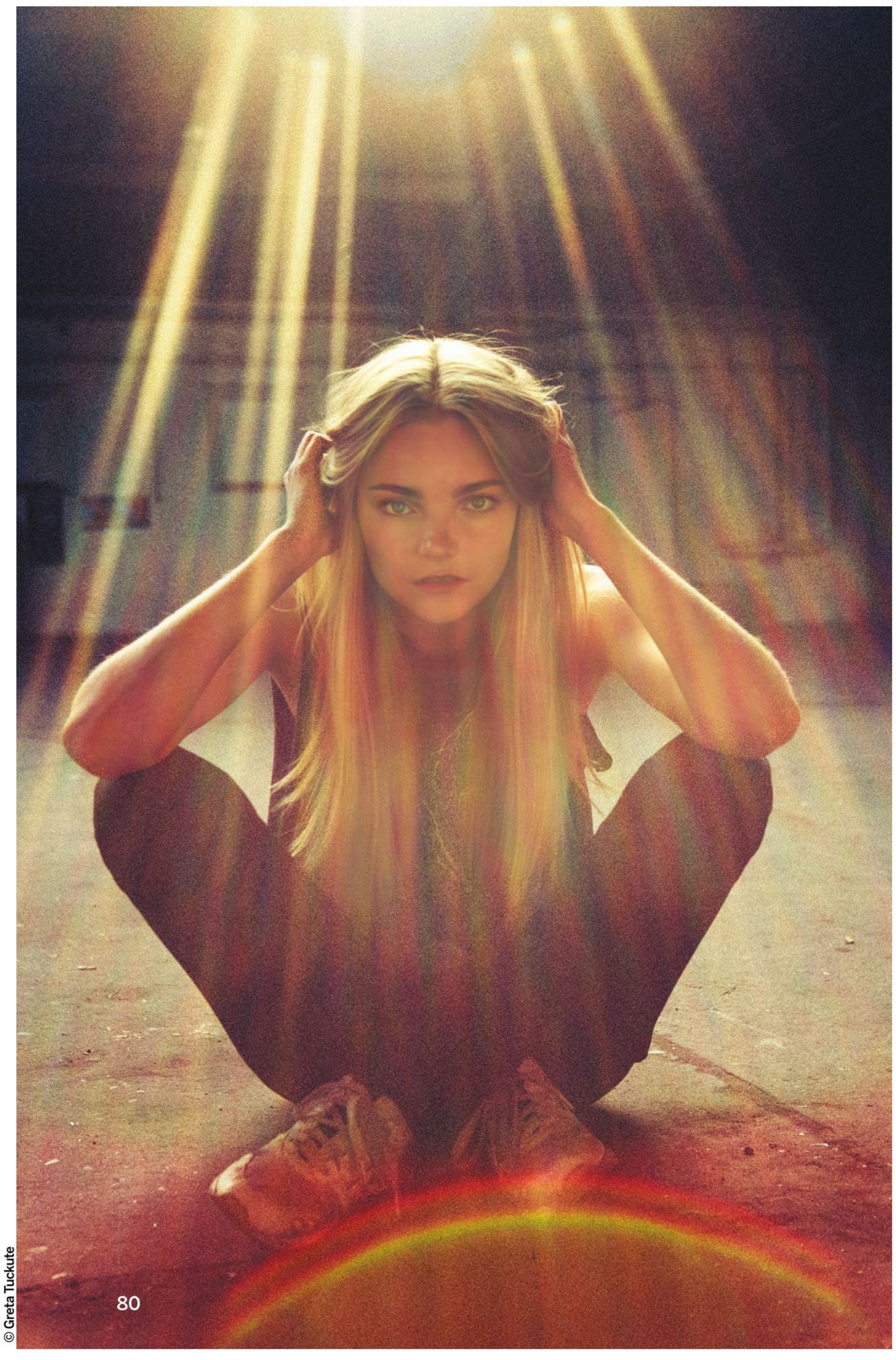
"Shooting with prisms can be a great way to quickly and cheaply add interest to your images", agrees Jake Hicks (**www.jakehicksphotography.com**). "Glass prisms can be bought for only a few pounds, and they can easily be kept in your camera bag then brought out when you want to add some drama and depth to your portraits."

It's important to remember that you can actually use pretty much anything to serve a similar purpose – it doesn't have to be a glass prism obtained solely for the purpose. Digital capture makes experimentation very practical indeed, as you can review the results.

Bottom-left

Embrace flare

Backlighting and flare go very much hand in hand, so allow the latter to form a key ingredient of your backlit portraits

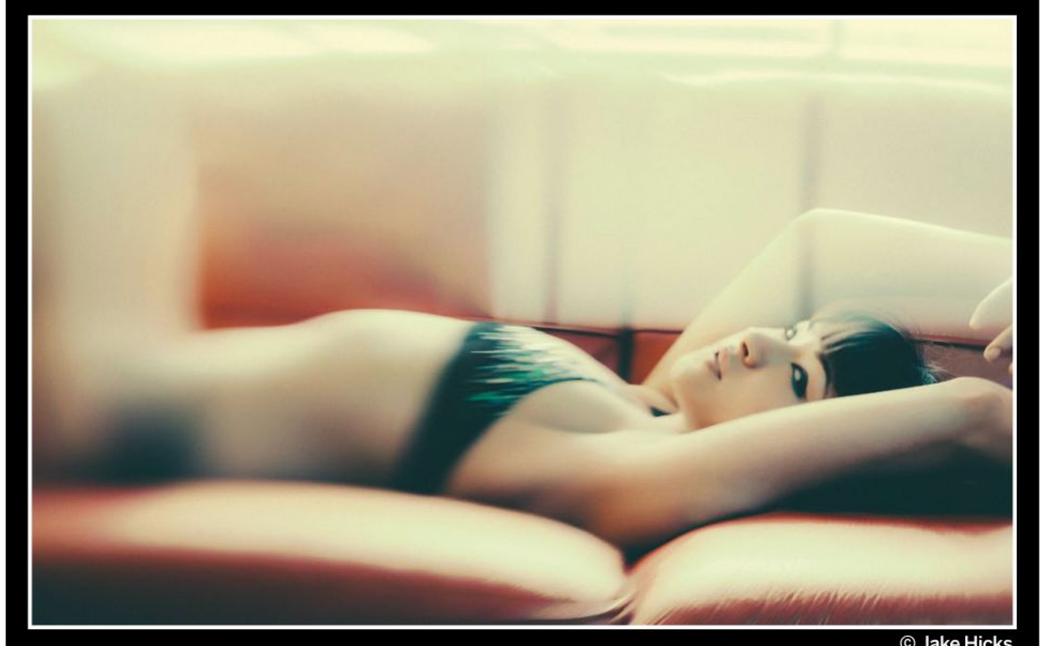


© Greta Tuckute

USE A PRISM INDOORS

Creative backlit portraits don't have to be captured outdoors, as Jake Hicks explains

"Prisms are often used outside on location, but with a little forethought they can create drama indoors just as easily. Here I had my subject lie on the sofa with a large window behind her. The back of the sofa shields her from most of the bright Sunlight but I placed my prism horizontally in front of the camera lens and angled it until I was reflecting the light and the blinds into the lens. This technique adds foreground drama where there was none."



© Jake Hicks

TOP TIPS

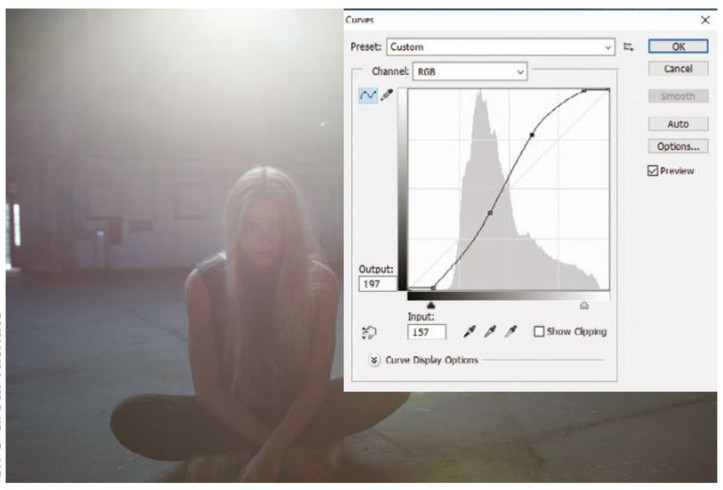
1 Hold your prism quite close to the lens to make the foreground distortion effect as blurry as possible.

2 Consider not only holding the prism vertically and horizontally across the lens – but for even more of a flared effect, try shooting down the length of the prism.

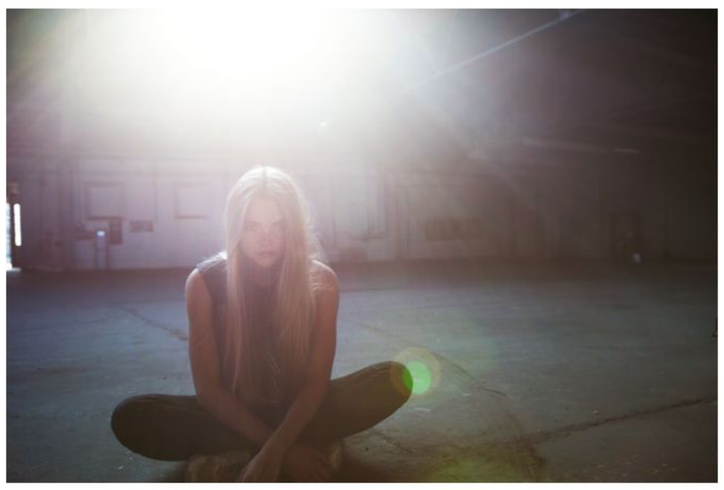
3 Your glass prism is essentially made of a long glass equilateral triangle. Because of this, it will reflect anything that is to the side of you if you hold it vertically flat to your camera lens. Use this to your advantage by placing a window to your side, and allow that window light to flare into the lens.

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EDIT BACKLIGHTING IN PHOTOSHOP Make subtle tweaks to enhance the effect



3x © Greta Tuckute





Light, contrast and clarity Adjust the light using Curves. Increase the highlights and intensify the shadows for a vivid contrast. Also, add a significant amount of Clarity to make the light and flares stand out.

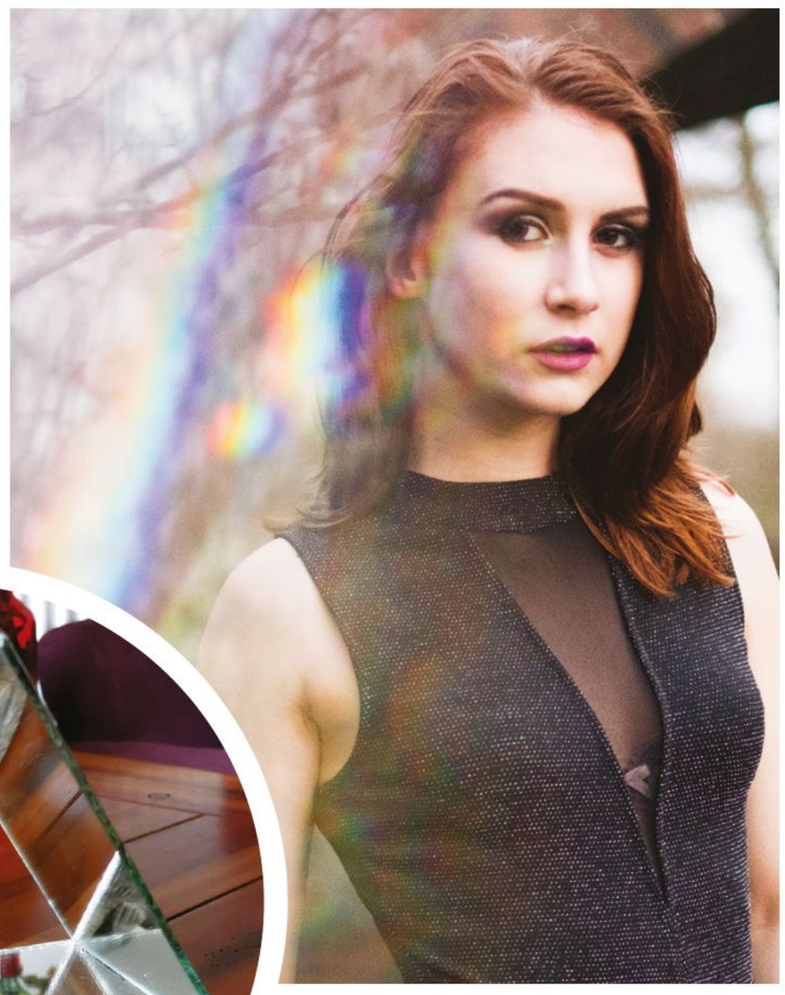
Colours Experiment with Color Balance and the colour channels in Curves to achieve the desired colour palette. For instance, intensify yellow and velvet hues to bring out a warm and Sunny ambience.

Burn/dodge Make your photo even more captivating by dodging the lens flares and Sun rays. Dodge some of the model's features as well. Burn the corners of the photograph and other areas that lack contrast.

GET CREATIVE

Capture a wider range of effects outdoors

The colour portrait here was captured using a cheap glass prism, but the black and white portrait below was captured with mirrors positioned around the lens to create multiple reflections. This enabled an artistic effect to be created in-camera. The challenge here is to ensure that unwanted objects, such as the photographer's feet or hands, do not end up being included as part of the final image.





Right
Mirrors
This bespoke object was used to capture the image below



CONTROL CONTRAST WITH REFLECTIVE SURFACES

Balance the exposure naturally when shooting backlit portraits

Sometimes, the high contrast caused by a backlit situation is too much, or at least more than desired. Carrying a reflector is one simple solution, but this is not always practical, and they can remove much of the drama. It's easy to forget that walls and footpaths can act as reflectors, bouncing light back onto the model. How you pose your model will have a big impact on the exposure balance.



Above
Position for balance
Turning your model in towards a reflective surface increases the amount of light that's bouncing back on their face

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SOFTEN AND DIFFUSE THE PORTRAIT

If you want a more muted effect, follow this advice

Lisa Holloway (**ljhollowayphotography.com**) strives to produce a softer result in her work, free from high contrast or flare. "Backlighting is a beautiful photography technique that highlights your subject while creating physical separation between subject and background", she says. "This produces a very appealing look in your images, and is one of my favourites to use during my sessions.

"Many photographers struggle with backlighting, as it can produce a lot of haze as well as lens flare... This is a popular look these days, but I want go over some of my favourite ways to create a diffused backlit portrait while avoiding these common issues.

"Haze and lens flare are caused by Sunlight entering directly into your lens. To avoid these issues in your backlit portraits, you need to diffuse the light that is hitting your lens. There are several ways to do this. One of the easiest methods is to choose a location with filtered backlight. Trees, shrubs, tall grasses, or even a building or other physical structure can perform this duty beautifully. When the light is coming in through the branches of a tree or other foliage, you can still achieve that lovely rim light around the edge of your subject while avoiding haze and lens flare.

"Another technique is to simply place your subject in the light, and find a patch of shade to stand in to take the photo. As long as your camera is in the shade, you will not have any issues with haze. Shooting at a slight angle to the Sun can also be helpful so that the light is not pouring directly into your lens. If no natural shade is available, I will have an assistant hold up something to cast shade onto my camera... A lens hood is another simple and cost effective way to achieve the same thing.

"My favourite backlighting technique is to shoot just as the Sun is setting. I have found that the softest and prettiest backlight happens from about 5-10 minutes before Sunset, up until about 15 minutes after the Sun has dipped below the horizon. This 20-25 minute time frame is pure magic.

"I always try to avoid open sky directly behind my subject as it will blow out in-camera, and instead, I look for interesting colours, textures, and framing elements in nature to enhance the background of my portraits."



All images © Lisa Holloway

AVOID LENS FLARE

Lisa Holloway reveals three of her favourite tips for softer shoots

"Photographers often struggle with backlit portraits as they can produce unsightly lens flare and haze. There are ways that you can avoid this, however. The first method I use is to place my subject in the Sunlight while I stand in the shade. A second method is to filter the backlight through trees, shrubs, or even a building or structure. Third, you can still get amazing, soft, backlit portraits just after the Sun has set, which alleviates issues with flare and haze."



1 Use shade Holloway stood in the shade created by the rocky cliffs to avoid haze and placed the subject in a beam of Sunlight that was peeking through the rocks. This illuminated her hair from behind.

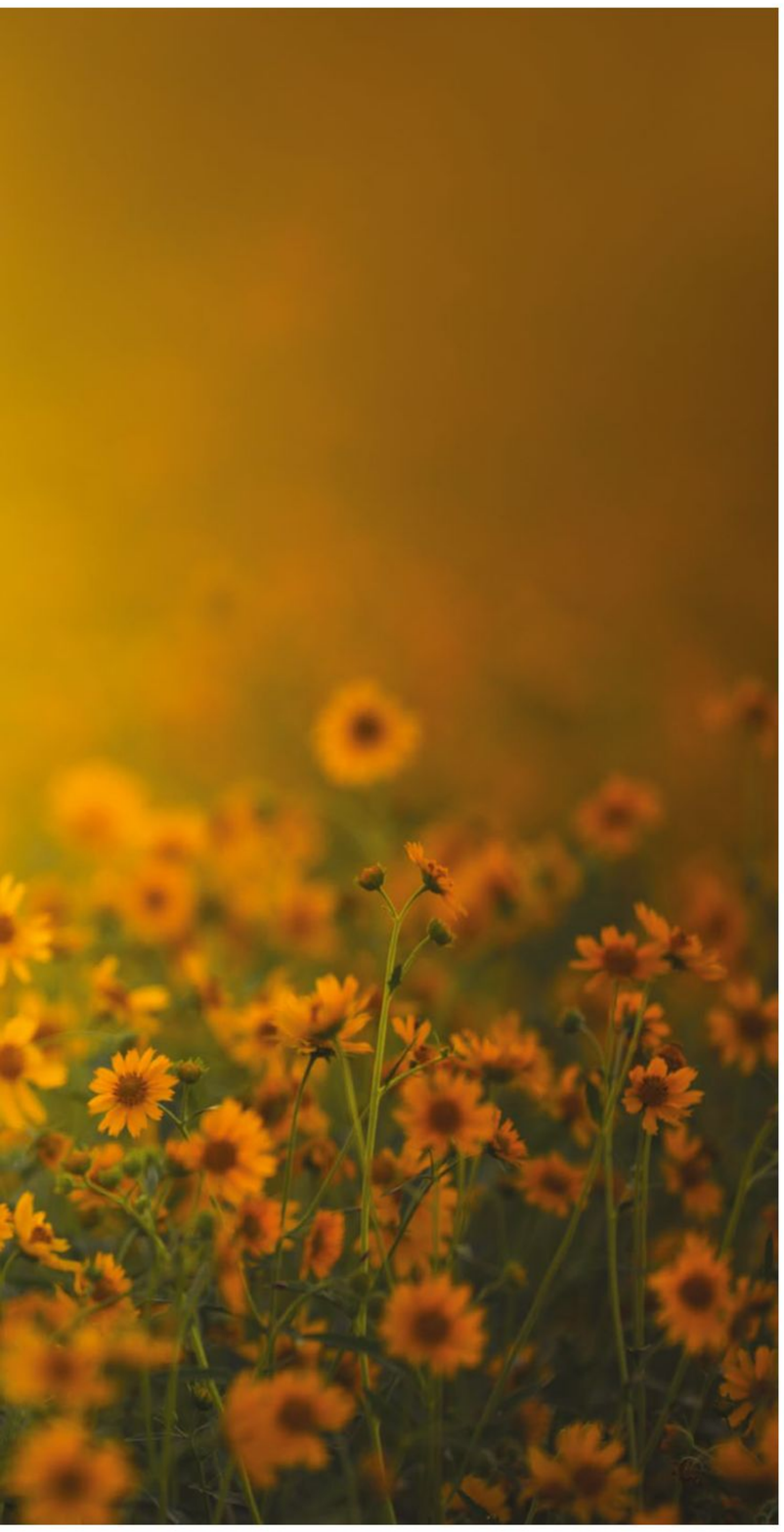


2 Setting Sun The Sun was setting behind the subjects and filtering softly through the golden, autumn aspen trees. This created a soft, backlit look without any haze or lens flare effect occurring.



3 Below the horizon This was taken after the Sun had dipped below the horizon. The sky behind them was still very bright, and you can see the soft backlight in the subject's hair and around the hen's feathers.

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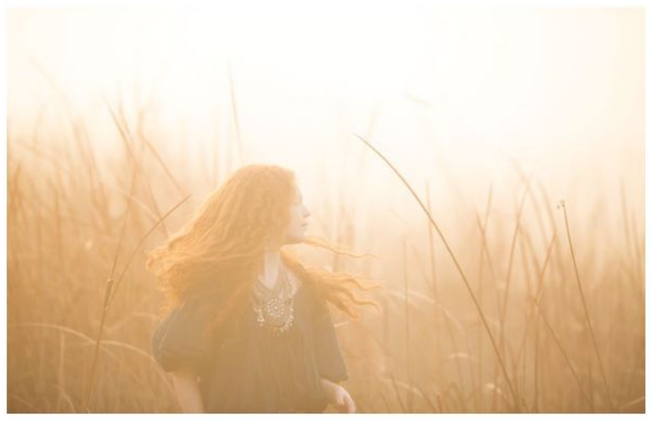




Left
Golden daydreams
This image of Octavia picking wild flowers was captured just after the Sun dipped below the horizon, allowing for beautiful, soft, diffused backlight that set her off from the field of yellow flowers

Above
Spring moments
Elliott and Mia sat in this field just as the Sun set behind the mountains in the background. This allowed for soft backlight that highlighted their hair and separated them from the background

EDIT IN PHOTOSHOP Use a Levels adjustment layer to help fix fog or haze problems



Original image This image of Lily was captured at Sunrise on a bright, foggy morning in Southern California. As you can see here, this image started out with a lot of unwanted haze, not only from the rising Sun, but the fog as well.



Edit the Levels An adjustment layer has been added in Photoshop. The black triangle on the left has been moved towards the right. This darkens your shadows and adds contrast to your image. This type of an adjustment can help correct hazy images.



Above
The final image
In the final, edited image of Lily, the haze has been reduced, and the colour vibrancy as well as the image contrast has been restored to a more pleasing level

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WORK WITH BACKLIGHT IN THE STUDIO

Learn how to use flash to produce a rim light effect

Rim lighting is a creative way to make use of backlighting in the studio. In short, it's the term given to the white-lined outline or halo of light created from a light source that is positioned behind, or aimed toward the side of a subject.

You'll see rim light all the time out on location, whenever someone steps in front of the Sun. The result is a vibrant show of colour and light coming through their hair; in the studio, however, it takes a little more effort to recreate the effect naturally.

Achieving attractive rim lighting in the studio is a balancing act of distance, light power and angle. The angle and positioning will determine the spread of the light and the direction it will fall on the subject; the power of the light will affect how much of your image will be affected, as well as help you control lens flare or blow back of light from the subject; and the angle of the light will also greatly impact on your chances of light aberration and flare in the shot.

FIND THE DARK SIDE

Darken your image quickly and easily with the Curves tool or the Levels tool. Simply convert your image to black and white and use the black pipette to auto-darken your image quickly and effectively.

Another way you can perfect your rim lighting is to use, and experiment with, various lighting modifiers. Beauty dishes and regular reflector bowls are a great start, especially if your result is intended to mimic the effect of Sunlight in the model's hair. However, for more creative results, a beauty dish positioned above the subject will allow a soft rounded flow of light that will result in an effective rim light.

For full-body rim lighting, softboxes with fabric grids or lamps with barn doors will be your best bet: the directional nature of the modifier, as well as its size, will cover the body. With the barn doors, you control the amount of light and its spread by simply closing off or opening up the barn doors.

To finish the image and refine the effect, it's worth considering converting your colour digital file into a black and white photo. This helps to simplify the results and focus the viewer's attention more precisely on the effect of the rim lighting.

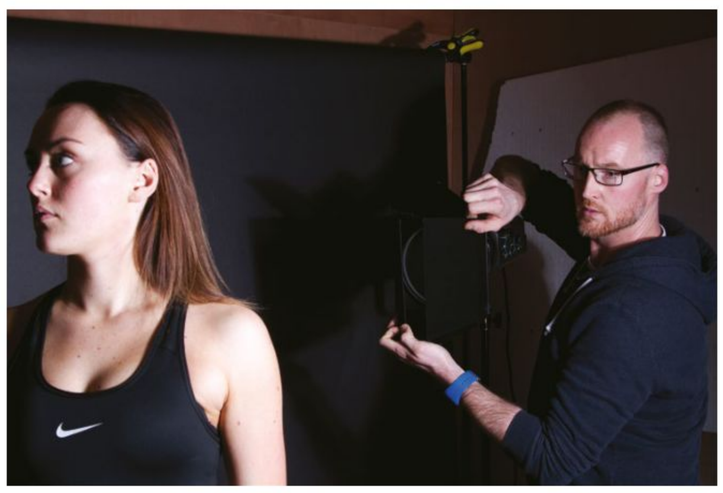
Right
Rim-lit body form
With a gentle light highlighting the contours of the figure, rim lighting can be an effective way to show shape and form in the simplest way



1 Choose your modifier Because this image needs to be an outline of the body, you want to use a fully directional modifier. Barn doors allow you to open up for more light, or close down for more directional flow. Strip softboxes can be used, too.



2 Adjust your power Adjust the power accordingly to the lights you are using. We are using 500W heads for this image, so the light doesn't need to be full power. However, if you are using a low-outage lamp like a 125, you may want to raise it to full.



3 Position the light Make sure that your light is facing your model in the way you want. Sometimes the best way to see what you are looking to achieve is to use the flash head's modelling light so you get a 'Live View' of sorts for where your light needs to be.



4 Position and guide The most important thing in your studio is your model, so help them understand what you are looking for in regards to poses by showing them. Remember that you want to create a shape that will result in a strong outline for the rim lighting.



5 Meter correctly Using a light meter is optional, but it's a sensible option if you want to achieve the best results from your shots. You need to meter for the incidental reading where the rays hit from the light, and not as the camera would see it.



6 Dial it in and shoot After taking the meter reading, input the settings from the light reading and take the shot, and of course review the image and check everything is as you want it to be. Remember to check the results on the back of the camera.

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FLASH ON LOCATION

You can use a flashgun on location, positioned behind the subject, to produce a backlighting effect that imitates Sunlight.



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5 ESSENTIAL TRICKS FOR LIGHTING

Master portrait photography with this easy-to-follow guide to professional lighting setups

As you'll have no doubt heard said many times, photography is all about light. Most professional photographers agree that they'd rather photograph a relatively ordinary subject in great light than an attractive scene in poor light. However, learning to truly appreciate and work with light is not always an easy process. This is partly because you need to become consciously aware of something that the majority of us take very much for granted. Even when seeing a rural landscape beautifully backlit by the setting Sun and reflecting upon the splendour of the scene, only landscape photographers and artists might consciously think of what they're witnessing in terms of the quality of the light and how it will impact on their work.

Just as breathing can feel strange if you start to actively think about it, thinking about light constantly seems strange at first, but – given time – bringing light to the forefront of your mind will enable you to become a better photographer. This is particularly important if you want to be able to not only respond to the light that's already there, but actually create a lighting pattern from scratch in a studio setting with a model.

There is a wealth of different looks that can be created in a studio setting even with just a few flash units and modifiers at hand to change the quality and quantity of light. Over the next few pages, you'll discover five different lighting setups that you can use in your own studio or home portraits.

Left
Lighting matters
Stunning studio lighting can seem complicated at first, but it can become second nature with practise if you first master the basics

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LIGHTING SETUP 1

REMBRANDT

Create a low-key, high-contrast, atmospheric portrait with Rembrandt's signature triangle

Some techniques in photography have come to be named in honour of the person most closely associated with them, and Rembrandt lighting is one of the best-known examples of this. Unlike other noted creative figures from history who are typically referred to by just their surname, Dutch painter Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn instead lent his first name to a style of lighting.

Rembrandt lighting is a style in which the shadows dominate, with light falling only in very specific areas of the scene to create a predominantly low-key, high-contrast result, an effect that's high on atmosphere and intrigue often referred to as chiaroscuro. More specifically still, Rembrandt favoured the inclusion of a distinctive upside-down triangle of light on the shadow side of the subject's face.

KEY LIGHT

This is really just another way of describing the main light, whose job it is to provide the defining pattern of shadows on the model's face. A fill light simply serves to soften the shadows created by the key light.

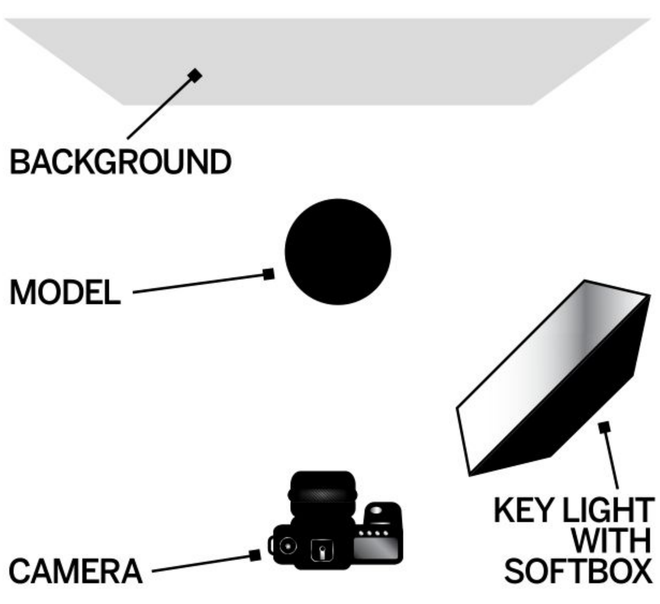
The strong use of shadow means that this lighting has a slimming effect on the face. With this in mind, if someone already has a particularly narrow face, Rembrandt lighting might not be the ideal option, but the great advantage of digital imaging is the ability to check the results instantly.

As the use of shadow is somewhat aggressive and unsubtle, rather than delicate and gentle, some photographers consider Rembrandt to be better suited to male subjects than female models, but always take any 'rules' you hear about studio lighting with a pinch of salt – at the end of the day, how the resulting portrait looks to you is the most important thing. It's true that Rembrandt lighting can create a chiselled look to the jaw line and emphasise the bone structure of the face in general, but the slimming effect that it has and the way it enhances the cheekbones is suitable for both genders.

A key advantage of Rembrandt lighting is that it only really requires one studio flash, typically fitted with a square or rectangular softbox. This is placed at around 45 degrees between the camera and the model, positioned so that it's angled down towards the model. The aim is to create that characteristic upside-down triangle of light on the shadow side of the subject's face. Ideally, this triangle should be no longer than the subject's nose – the subject's upper eyelid and eyebrow on the unlit side should be in shadow again.

Some photographers add extra lights into the equation. For instance, a fill light might be employed on the opposite side of the key light in order to lift the shadows slightly and create a less dramatic result, or a light might be placed behind the subject to provide a touch of rim lighting or as a hair light for some separation between the subject and the (typically dark) background.

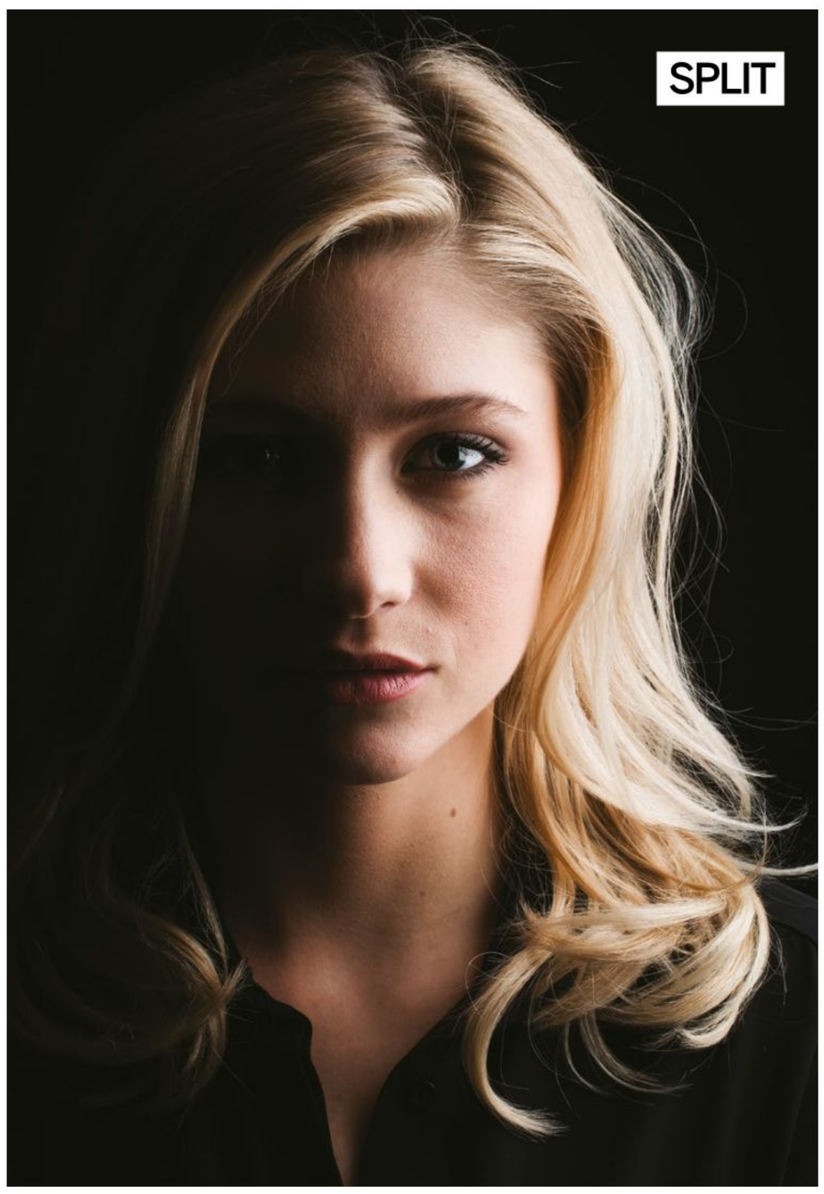
THE STUDIO SETUP



Top
Split lighting
If the key light is moved round too far away from the camera, so it's entirely to one side of the model, a split-lighting effect will be created instead

Middle
Work with angles
It's not only the position of the key light in relation to the model and the camera that matters; it's also the height of the key light and how it's angled onto the model

Right
Short lighting
This is very similar to Rembrandt lighting but the upside-down triangle is perfect on the shadow side of the model's face. Short lighting means that more of the shadow side is showing than the lit side of the face



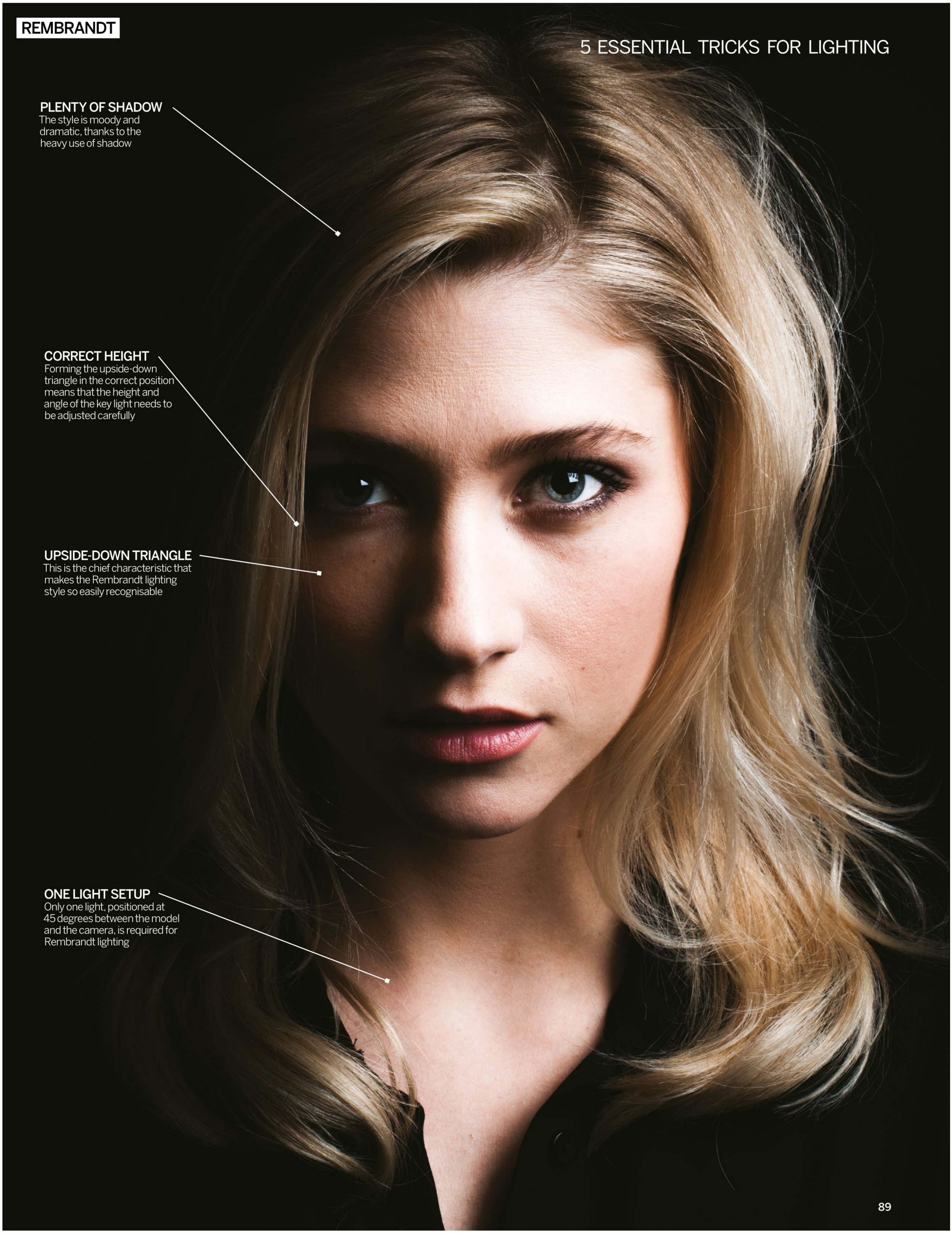




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REMBRANDT

5 ESSENTIAL TRICKS FOR LIGHTING



PLENTY OF SHADOW
The style is moody and dramatic, thanks to the heavy use of shadow

CORRECT HEIGHT
Forming the upside-down triangle in the correct position means that the height and angle of the key light needs to be adjusted carefully

UPSIDE-DOWN TRIANGLE
This is the chief characteristic that makes the Rembrandt lighting style so easily recognisable

ONE LIGHT SETUP
Only one light, positioned at 45 degrees between the model and the camera, is required for Rembrandt lighting

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LIGHTING SETUP 2

BROAD

Adapt your model's pose in relation to the light

Perhaps one of the things that surprises people most about studio lighting is the fact that far less kit is needed than many photographers first assume. As you've already seen with Rembrandt lighting, just one studio flash unit fitted with a modifier, as commonplace as the humble softbox, can be used to create a dramatic portrait. Placing an emphasis on shadows is one approach to using just one light, but there's no reason not to do the exact opposite of this. Essentially, the difference between broad lighting and short lighting lies in which side of the subject's face is directed towards the camera.

Short lighting – and it's near relation, Rembrandt lighting – has a slimming effect on the face, as the combination of lighting and pose means that more of the shadow side of the face is towards the camera, while broad lighting means that the side of the face that's more in shadow is turned away from the camera.

As the term broad lighting suggests, this type of lighting has the effect of making the subject's face fuller and broader. However, this isn't meant to give the impression that this lighting setup is to be avoided; broad lighting can be used to create images that have a distinct fashion look to them – an effect that can be exaggerated through the way you pose your subject.

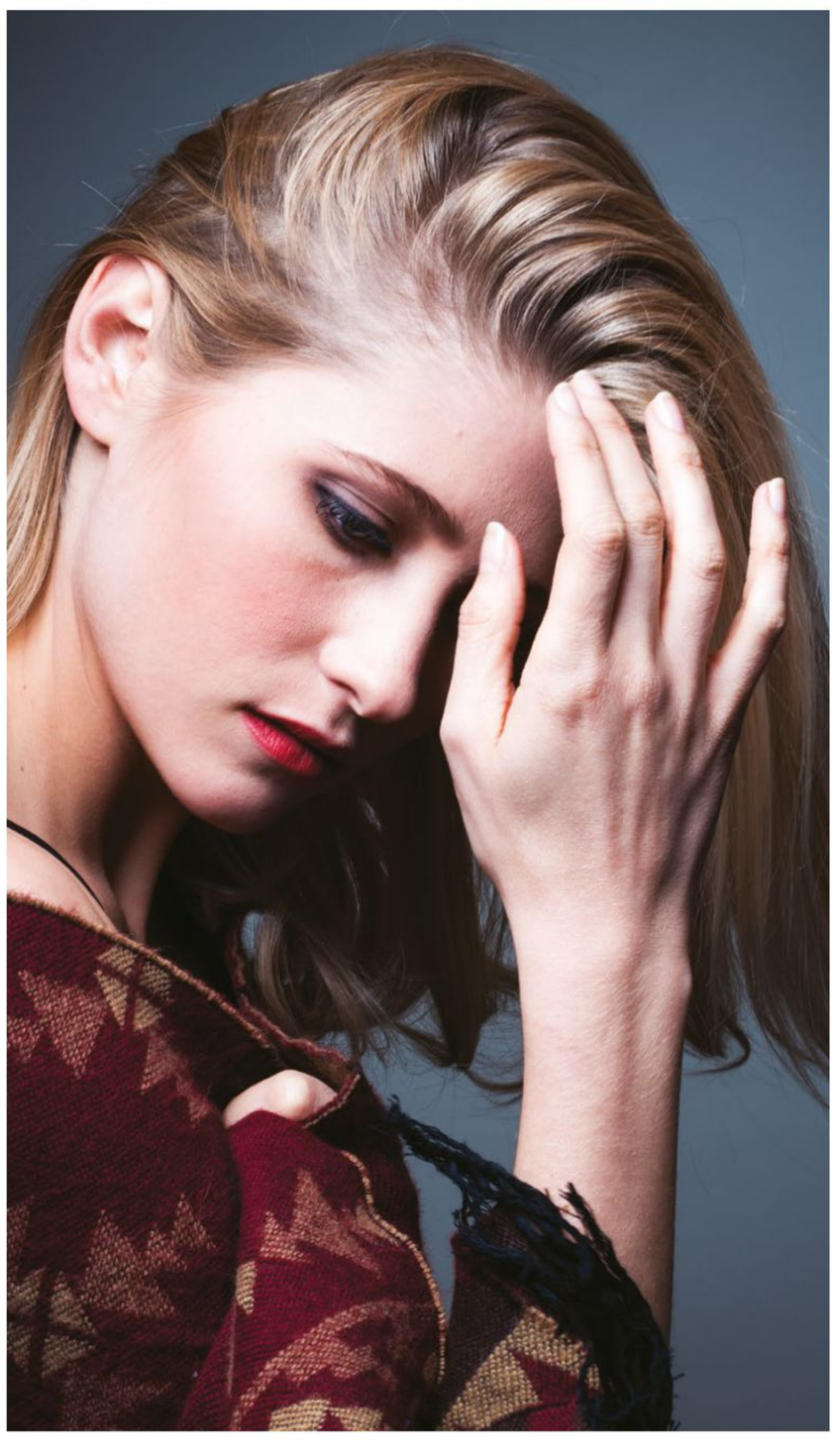
One softbox is all that's required to achieve the effect but, as with Rembrandt lighting, you can add further lights to enhance the effect, if you are confident to experiment. In the examples here, a softbox has been positioned to the model's right – almost at a full 90 degrees to the position of the camera – and she's posed so that less of the shadow side is visible. Placing the model fairly near an unlit white paper background means that the background appears grey and some of the light from the softbox creates a slight vignetting effect, which can be easily enhanced in Photoshop. Adding a slight toning effect, so the background appears a little cooler, is another post-production adjustment that can work well. This look can be created with one light, one softbox and a plain wall in your home.

BACKGROUND LIGHTS

The role of background lights is, generally, to provide separation between the subject and the background, which enables you to create a sense of depth in the portrait.

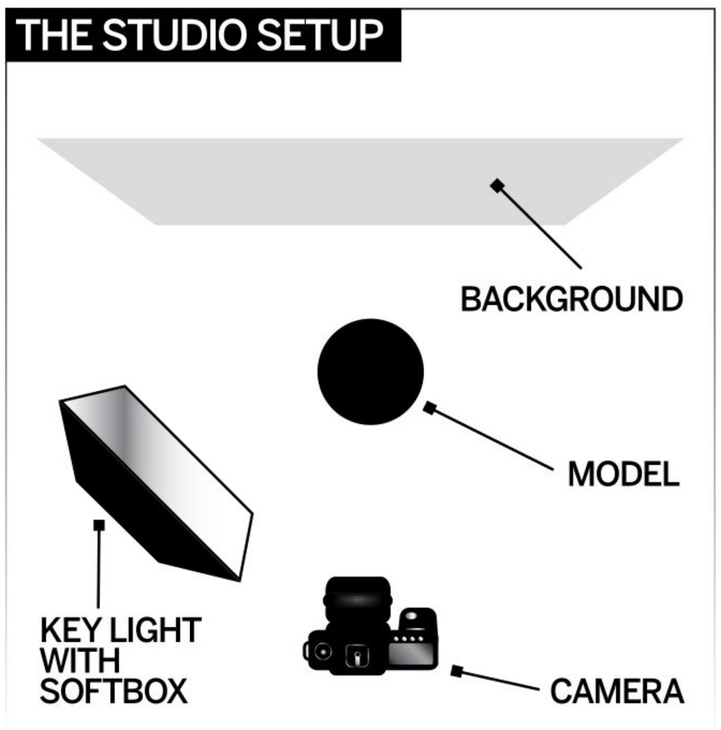


Above
Broad lighting
This is the opposite of both the Rembrandt and short lighting styles. The model is lit by a softbox and posed so that the shadow side isn't as visible



Right
Fashion effect
With the right sort of pose and direction, you can make creative portraits with a distinctive fashion feel using broad lighting

THE STUDIO SETUP



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LIGHTING SETUP 3

BUTTERFLY

Get to grips with this classic style of beauty lighting

Butterfly lighting is a good lighting setup to use for portraits of female subjects, producing flattering results with soft, subtle shadows. Like Rembrandt lighting, it will emphasise cheekbones, but in a much gentler way.

Butterfly is sometimes referred to as clamshell lighting or just beauty lighting, but clamshell lighting is typically created using two lights positioned to re-create the shape of a clamshell with the camera positioned between them, while butterfly lighting is typically created with a large light source directly in front of and above the subject with a reflector beneath them so the eyes are not too dark. As with the other one-light setups described in this feature, other lights can be added to taste. Milenko Đilas, who we interview later, likes to use a light, fitted with a snoot, pointed towards the background.

The butterfly-shaped shadow on the underside of the nose is generally the characteristic that gives the lighting setup its name, but look too at the way a fairly large, gentle shadow is formed on each of the subject's cheeks beneath the cheekbone – almost like the wings of a butterfly.

Left

Butterfly lighting

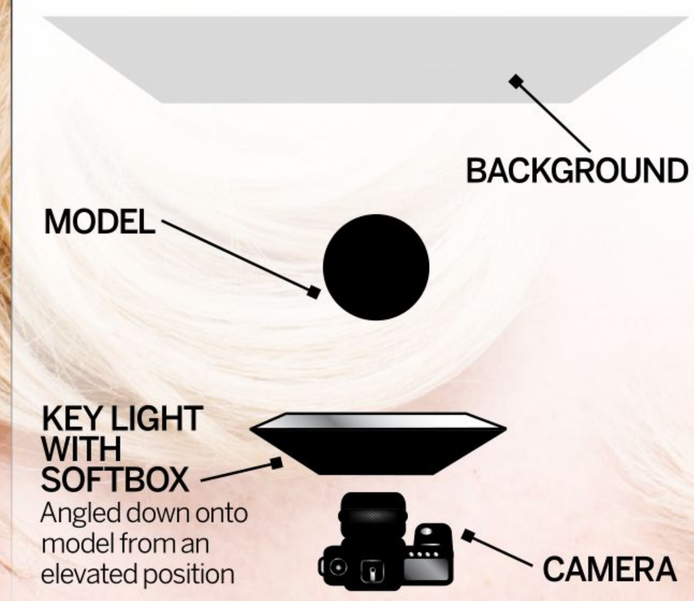
This is a very elegant and beautiful style of lighting that produces attractive results when capturing portraits of women

Below

Using a Triflector

This is formed of three separate reflector panels, which are typically silver or gold, on a stand that enables each panel to be adjusted separately

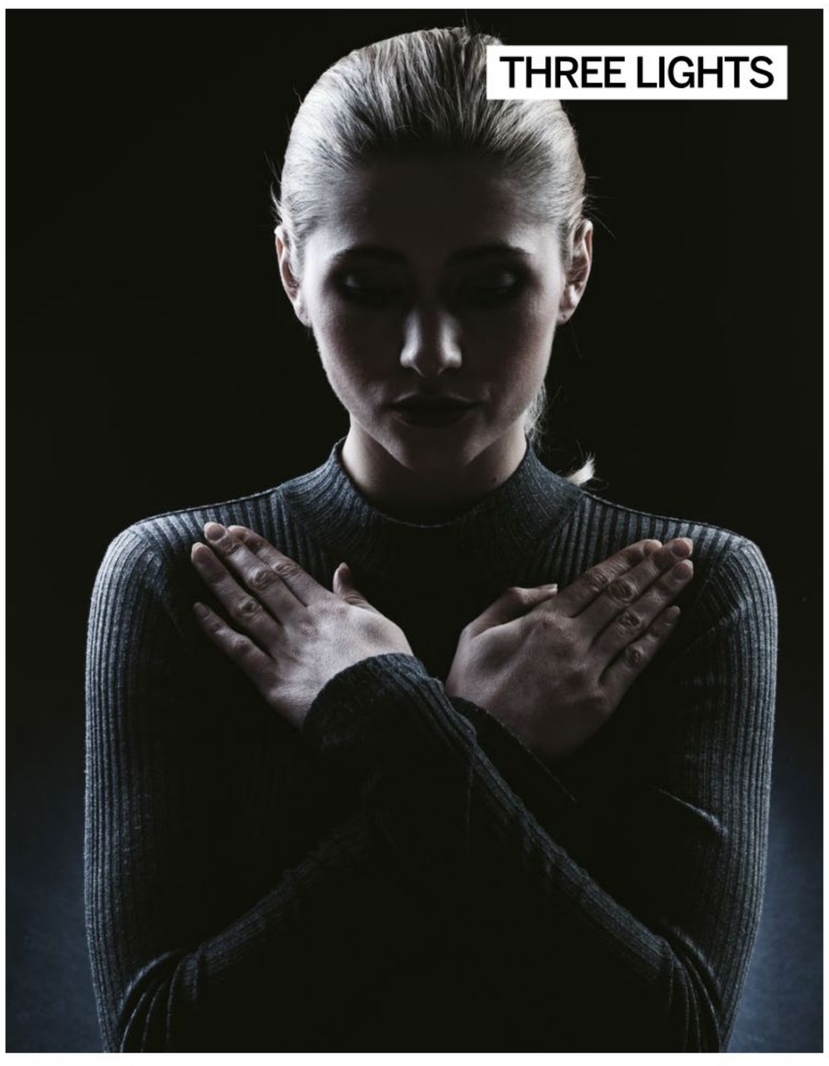
THE STUDIO SETUP

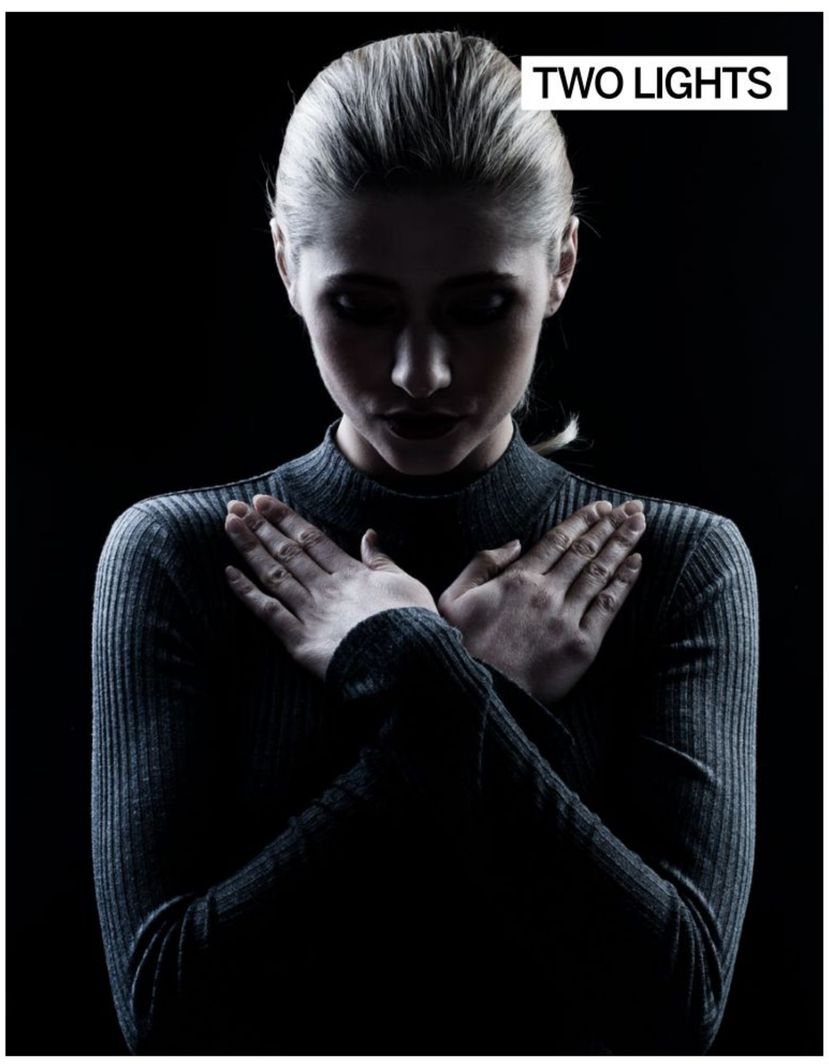




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LIGHTING SETUP 4

MODERN THREE-POINT

Create a striking portrait with this three-light setup for professional and striking imagery

As the name makes clear, this lighting setup requires three lights to be used, but in truth it's not as complicated as it might first sound. Traditionally, the three lights used in three-point lighting were a key light and a fill light – both positioned in front and slightly to the side of the model – and a third light positioned behind the model as a hair light or rim light.

However, a slightly more modern take on this involves placing one key light source in front of the model, as with butterfly lighting, but often not as high above them and perhaps slightly to one side rather than directly in front of the model, and then using two lights, one on each side, as rim lights. Taking this a step further, you can try using a fourth light as a background light, fitted with barn doors or a snoot in order to create a spotlight effect on the background. Using a fourth light on the background will create a sense of separation.

Employed with a white or blue background and with some editing steps in Adobe Camera Raw, Lightroom or Photoshop, this lighting setup produces results very much along the lines of the work that photographers such as Jill Greenberg (www.jillgreenberg.com) are famous for using.

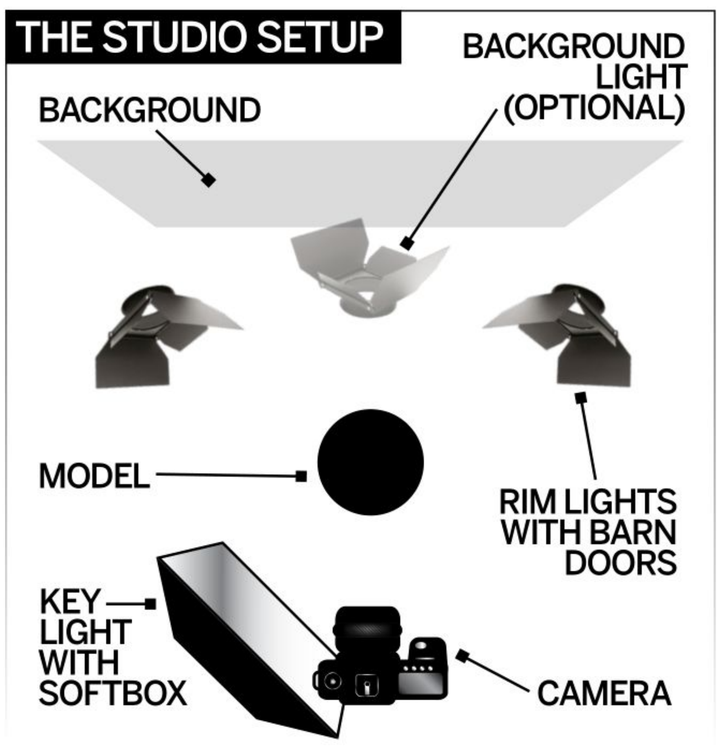
If you don't have access to that many studio flash units, then fear not, as there are creative variations on this that involve only two lights. For example, try using two lights behind the subject on either side as rim lights and not using any front lighting at all. This can be incredibly effective, particularly if you have access to strip softboxes. Adding a third light on the background can increase the drama considerably, so if you've got a flash to spare then that's worth experimenting with.

Finally, you can use two lights in a cross-lighting pattern so that they are effectively directly opposite each other with the model in the middle. A reflector can be positioned to the front of the model, on the same side as the backlight, to provide a touch of fill.

WORK WITH REFLECTORS

If you feel that a fill light is going to be too much – or you do not have access to one – a reflector is often the ideal alternative, enabling you to soften shadows with speed and ease.

THE STUDIO SETUP



Opposite
Modern three-point lighting
Place two lights on either side of the model, behind her, to serve as rim lights. A large softbox can then be positioned to the front of the model as the main light

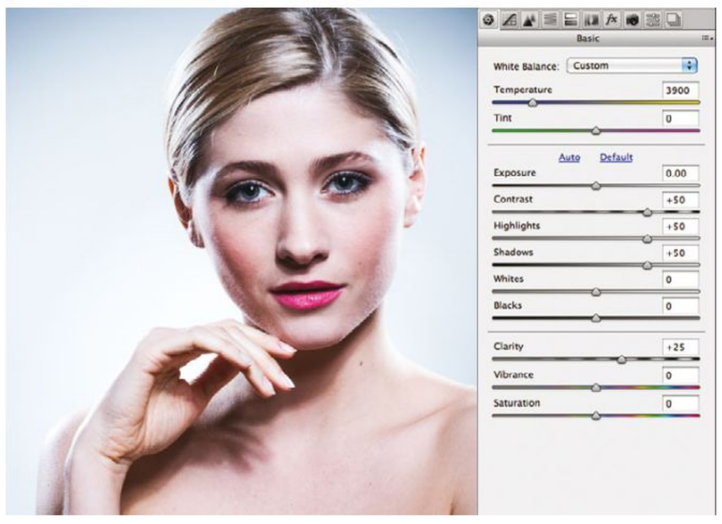
Top
Add a fourth light
Add a fourth light fitted with barn doors or a snoot as a background light

Middle
Turn off the main light
Turning off the key light can create very dramatic and striking effects

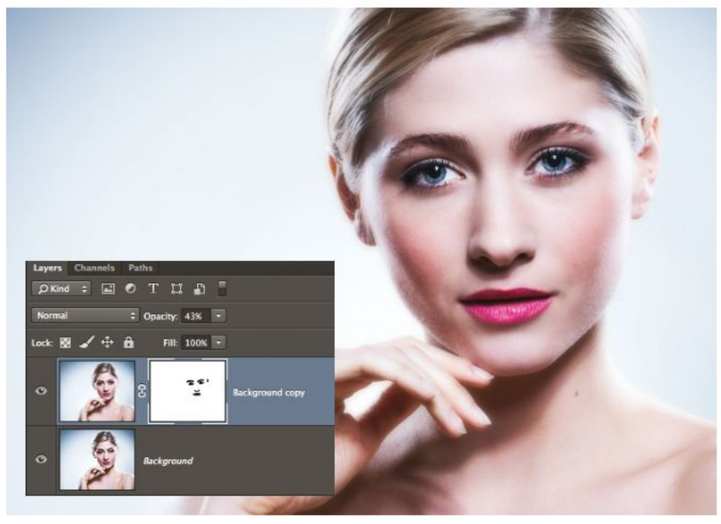
Bottom
Turn off the background light
Just the two rim lights on either side of the model by themselves can produce an interesting effect

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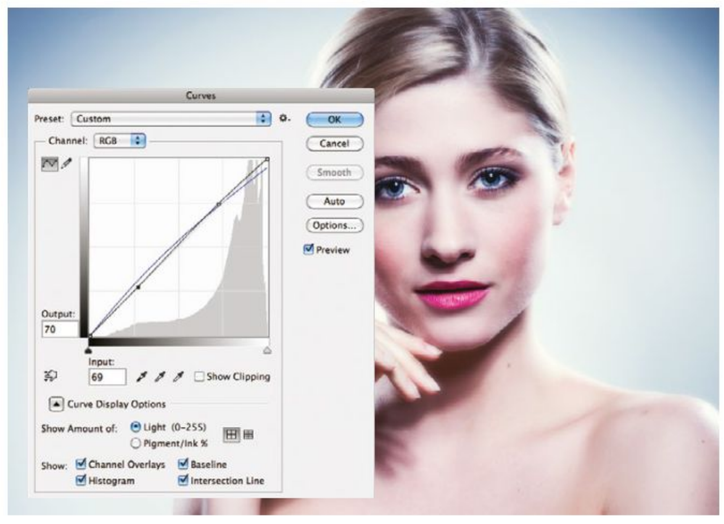
ENHANCE YOUR THREE-POINT LIGHTING SETUP Use post-processing to emphasise the effect



1 Process in RAW Adjust the white balance of the image and boost the Contrast, Highlights, Shadows and Clarity sliders to enhance and improve the portrait.



2 Soft focus In Photoshop, create a duplicate layer then apply Gaussian Blur. Lower the Opacity of the layer and add a layer mask to bring back the eyes, lips and eyebrows.



3 Adjust the curves Press Cmd/Ctrl+M to bring up the Curves dialogue box and adjust them to change both the contrast and enhance the colour toning to taste.

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LIGHTING SETUP 5

HOLLYWOOD

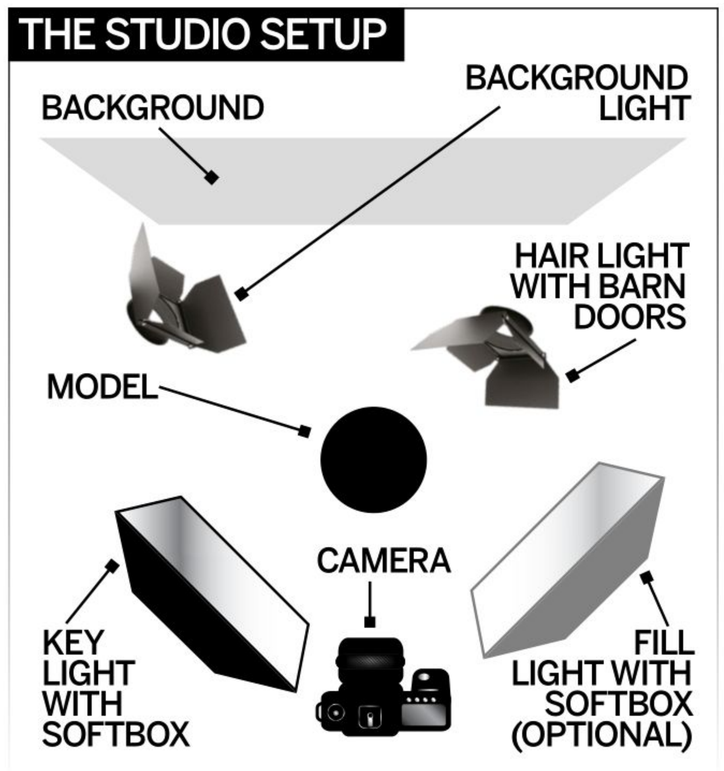
Use lighting to re-create a timeless, glamorous portrait, reminiscent of old film star shots

If you have access to three or four lights, you can create a lighting style that's most commonly associated with portraits of Hollywood actresses between the Thirties and Fifties. Typically, portraits captured using this lighting style are presented in black and white with perhaps a slight soft-focus effect.

In terms of the positioning of the key light, it's normally kept fairly high and angled down onto the subject, similar to the butterfly lighting style.

The basic Hollywood lighting look can be created simply by having the key light in the butterfly position, which is in front and above the subject. However, often the key light is moved to the 45-degree position used in Rembrandt lighting, but it's positioned to ensure that the light creates a gentle loop shadow at the bottom of the nose – not the upside-down triangle of light that's used in Rembrandt lighting.

A fill light is often used as well, but this is generally weak and can be foregone if preferred. One key element is the use of a hair light positioned behind the subject and a background light to create separation. The hair light, if positioned on the opposite side to the key light, will provide fill on the shadow side.



Below
Hollywood lighting
This lighting setup, which requires three or four lights, creates a glamorous result reminiscent of the classic Hollywood era



MODIFIERS TO USE

These are the attachments that we used to control the quantity and quality of light

SOFTBOX

These come in a range of different sizes and several different shapes, though standard square and rectangular ones are perhaps the most versatile. Thin, strip softboxes are useful to have, however. Don't forget to experiment with removing the diffuser panel(s) to produce a slightly harder light source.



SNOOT

This produces a tightly focused beam of light and is therefore useful for controlling the fall of light on a background or for a localised hair light with minimal spill.



REFLECTOR DISH AND BARN DOORS

This highly useful combination enables you to control the spread of the light. The reflector dish produces a more specific beam of light, while barn doors make it possible to direct where this beam can reach – and where it can't – quickly and easily.



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PRO LIGHTING TIPS

Photographer Milenko Đilas reveals his approach to lighting



What's your favourite type of studio lighting for portraits?
A two-light technique, with a white or silver reflector – butterfly lighting. [It involves a] main key light combined with a silver beauty dish [that] I usually put on a boom stand and keep as parallel and close to the model's face as I can.

To soften any harsh shadows, I use a white or silver reflector, all depending on how soft I want those shadows to be... I use the beauty dish when I need nice contrasts, for example when I want the model's skin to get a warmer, more copperish tone... The beauty dish allows me to control the light flow and, most importantly, it doesn't dissipate light. The second light, with a snoot modifier, I use for the background... I myself use it to get that lighter circle that gradually fades out so that I get a nice vignette in my background... This light effect puts an added focus on the model.

Where do photographers go wrong with lighting and how can this be avoided?
I think that people generally make the mistake of being afraid to experiment... If you don't try, you will never succeed, so be brave and go for it, results will surely follow... It is extremely important to learn what effect certain light modifiers can achieve, to figure out how to use them properly, and control the light as you would like to. Light control is very important in order to get the end result you are looking for. When I learned to control the light, my photos started getting better and better... I always, *always* take a look at the histogram, which unfortunately a lot of people don't do, and this is exactly where their mistake is.

Do you think that particular lighting styles suit men and women differently?
When I am photographing male models, I like to use split lighting and Rembrandt lighting, so I can accentuate that macho look. The shadows that remain on one side of the face bring out a dramatic feel and I like that effect. As for women, I stick to the butterfly light, but I may use it on men occasionally.

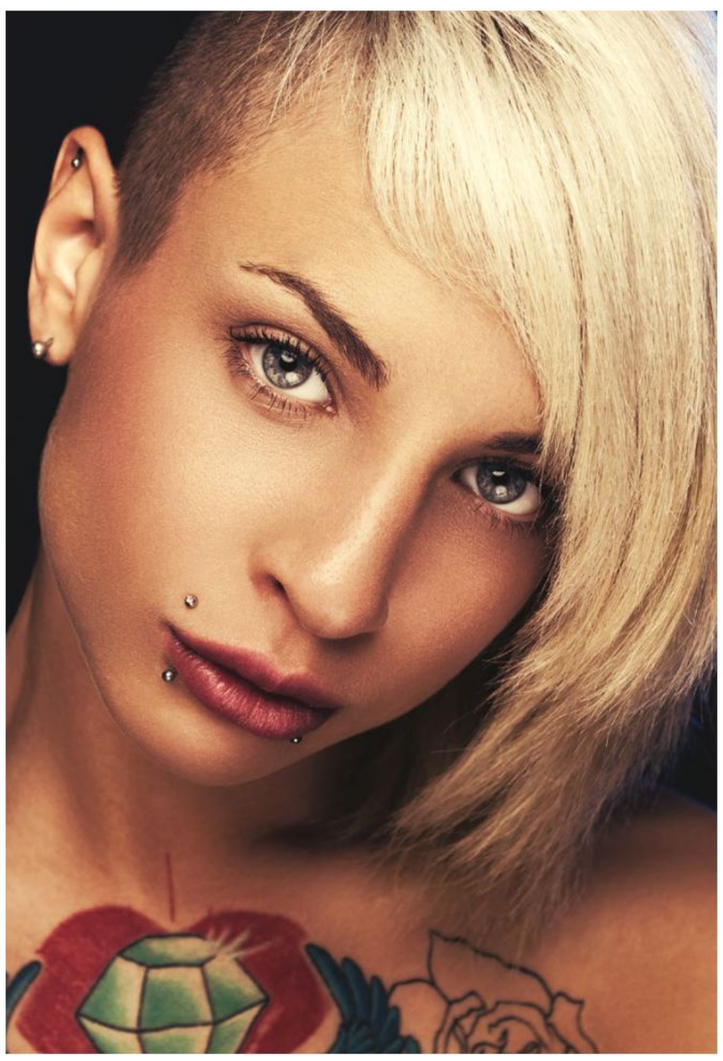
What's your top advice for studio lighting?
Don't overdo the lights if it's not absolutely necessary. Work with one light only, and when you start seeing great effects, gradually introduce more light sources. Using one light source can help you make stunning, natural-looking photographs, and if you combine this with a white or silver reflector, the results will be absolutely amazing. Also, don't overdo the intensity of the light; bring it up gradually. Always explain to the model their radius of movement; in other words, show them the imaginary circle that they shouldn't stray from. If they move around too much, you risk getting overexposed parts of the face.



3 x © Milenko Đilas

Above
Three-light setup
The main light was fitted with the silver beauty dish close to the model's face and to the left. For the background, Đilas used a snoot modifier

Right
Two-light setup
The main light was fitted with the silver beauty dish on a boom stand close to the model's face for a butterfly effect. For an even lighting effect, the angle of the light is set to about 45 degrees



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SHOOT PRO MALE PORTRAITS

Take incredible shots of male models with our in-depth guide to the techniques you need to master

Every photoshoot, and every model, is different – there are so many variables that can alter the look and feel of the final images. The personality, body shape, style, mood, confidence and the gender of your model will all play a role in the outcome of a shoot, and although no model will ever be exactly the same as another, there are some general tips you need to take into consideration when it comes to shooting a specific gender.

The most obvious difference between men and women is body shape – women are generally less angular than men and their bodies are made up of a series of curves and flowing lines, whereas the male body tends to consist of much more defined angles and rigid lines. The 'ideal' male body is often referred to as being a V shape – broad shoulders and a small waist, conveying notions of strength and power, which are also traits traditionally associated with masculinity. However, it can be easy to get hung up on producing stereotypical masculine imagery when photographing men, but not all men wish to be portrayed in this way and if your model isn't comfortable with these traits then their awkwardness will show through.

It is important to remember that not every male portrait needs to be conveyed as masculine in the same way that not every female should be photographed in a feminine manner. The key to any portraiture is to capture the emotion and personality of your model and not just emphasise stereotypical ideals.

Over the next few pages, discover the essential elements to consider when shooting a man, from styling your shoot and perfecting posing to lighting tricks and key editing techniques that will help you take your manly captures to the next level.

Left

Substance and style

One of the most important aspects of male model shooting is keeping the process as relaxed as possible – it will really show in your final images

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Above
Keep it relaxed
Your model's body language will mirror their clothing. So, comfortable clothing will produce relaxed poses

Top
Suited and booted
Getting him to put his hands in his pockets will prevent them from hanging awkwardly at his sides

STYLE YOUR SHOOT

Find out what poses will work best for your male model and style your shoot accordingly

As with any photoshoot, styling and clothing decisions are an important aspect of the planning process and what you choose will contribute to the overall mood and feel of the images. Professional photographer Chris Davis (specular.viewbook.com) advises, "Creating a strong story can help as it can give you ideas on what the character should wear and why, and what accessories or props would be needed [to] add something more to this story." Style of clothing will also play a part in telling the story of your subject's personality, so it is important that you discuss this with the model beforehand to ensure they remain comfortable. If you do want to maintain a masculine feel to the imagery then be sure to pick styles that aren't too bold – a dark suit with a white shirt and tie will give your model a sophisticated appearance and casual jeans with a neutral-coloured T-shirt will present a more relaxed, but still very masculine, look.

The type of clothing that you choose can help with posing your model – often, when put in front of a camera, men can feel a little awkward and forget how to naturally hold their hands. Giving the model something to do, such as adjusting their tie or watch, can give their hands a purpose and it's a great way of keeping the shot looking as relaxed as possible.

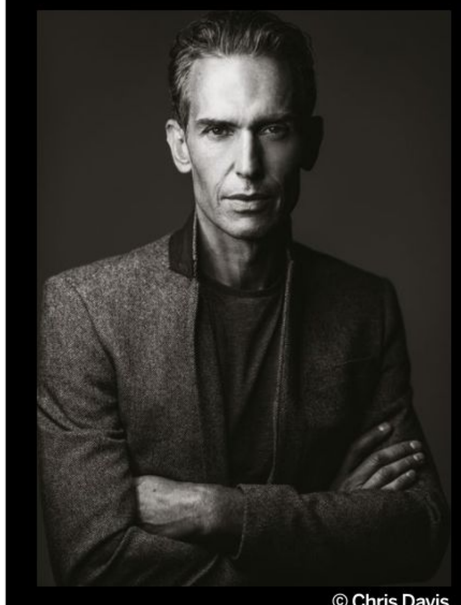
KEEP IT RUGGED

Ask him to come to the shoot with a few days' growth of facial hair. Facial and body hair is the ultimate masculine feature so try to emphasise it in your shots where you can.

Posing men is very different to posing women and the key to this is ensuring they are completely relaxed. To generalise, men are likely to wish to see themselves as being strong, fit and confident, which is often what you will want to convey in images of them – in which case it is all about the jawline. A simple pose to remember is getting your model to stand with their shoulders square to the camera with their waist turned away slightly. This will emphasise the broadness of his shoulders and slim his waist, creating the desired V shape. It's important to do what looks natural, but it's good to have set-ups like this in mind.

Some photographers don't consciously pick different poses specifically for men and women, but instead shoot what feels right to their subject. Pro photographer Ian Phillips-McLaren (www.ianphillips-mclaren.com) says, "I really just shoot the person in front of me, I don't ask [the subject to do things] or make people pose, as such. I try to let the person do what comes naturally to them." Chris Davis agrees: "I think poses that look too deliberate or uncomfortable can end up looking bit cheesy and awkward... It's good to develop your own sense of taste; you will learn over time how far you can take poses and when to pull back."

POSED TO PERFECTION Experiment with different poses to produce relaxed captures



© Chris Davis

KEEP ARMS CROSSED
Getting the model to fold their arms across their chest is especially effective for a man. It helps to square off their shoulders and will take care of tightening their stomach muscles too, while making them look confident.



© Chris Davis

GIVE HANDS PURPOSE
To avoid awkwardly hanging arms and hands, get them to adjust their tie or watch for a sophisticated look. For a more casual appearance get them to place their arms in their pockets. Avoid positioning hands on hips.



© Ian Phillips-McLaren

LEAN A LITTLE
Sometimes standing squarely can look a little awkward, so encourage your model to lean against a wall or tree for a more relaxed look – crossing their arms while they lean will square off their shoulders, too.



© Ian Phillips-McLaren

EMPHASISE THE JAWLINE
Clever use of shadows on your model's neck will emphasise the jawline to make sure it doesn't blend into the neck. Biting teeth together can emphasise the jawline as well, but if they bite too tight it will look forced.



© Chris Davis

NOTE THE EXPRESSION
The model's expression will greatly affect the overall image; many photographers go for a classic squinting of the eyes when posing men. As with all other aspects of posing, the model's expression shouldn't look forced.

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ANATOMY OF A POSE

Find out how to get the best from your male model shoots



EXPRESSION
If your model is a little nervous, getting him to look down and away from the camera works really well. Here the model looks deep in thought and at ease

POSING
Positioning your model so he isn't conscious of his hands is important, so get him to lean into a position that is natural to him – he'll radiate a cool, calm confidence

CLOTHING
Having the model wear jeans and a T-shirt creates a very relaxed feel to the image. Showing off his arms and chest hair reinforces his masculinity

LIGHTING
Men look great with very contrasting lighting. Deep shadows with reasonably bright highlights help define and emphasise his features

BARE FEET
The bare feet create a very open feel to the image and make the model look like he is in his natural environment. Shoes can sometimes date a picture too, so removing them is definitely something to consider

STYLE YOUR SHOOT

Discover essential styling and clothing considerations for your male model shoot

Smart and sophisticated A dark suit teamed with a white shirt is the ideal choice if you want your model to look sophisticated and ooze confidence.

Relaxed and casual Keeping your male model relaxed is the key to a successful shoot, so getting him to wear jeans and a T-shirt will help with this. Many men will have a go-to pair of jeans that they feel most comfortable in, so ask him to bring them along.

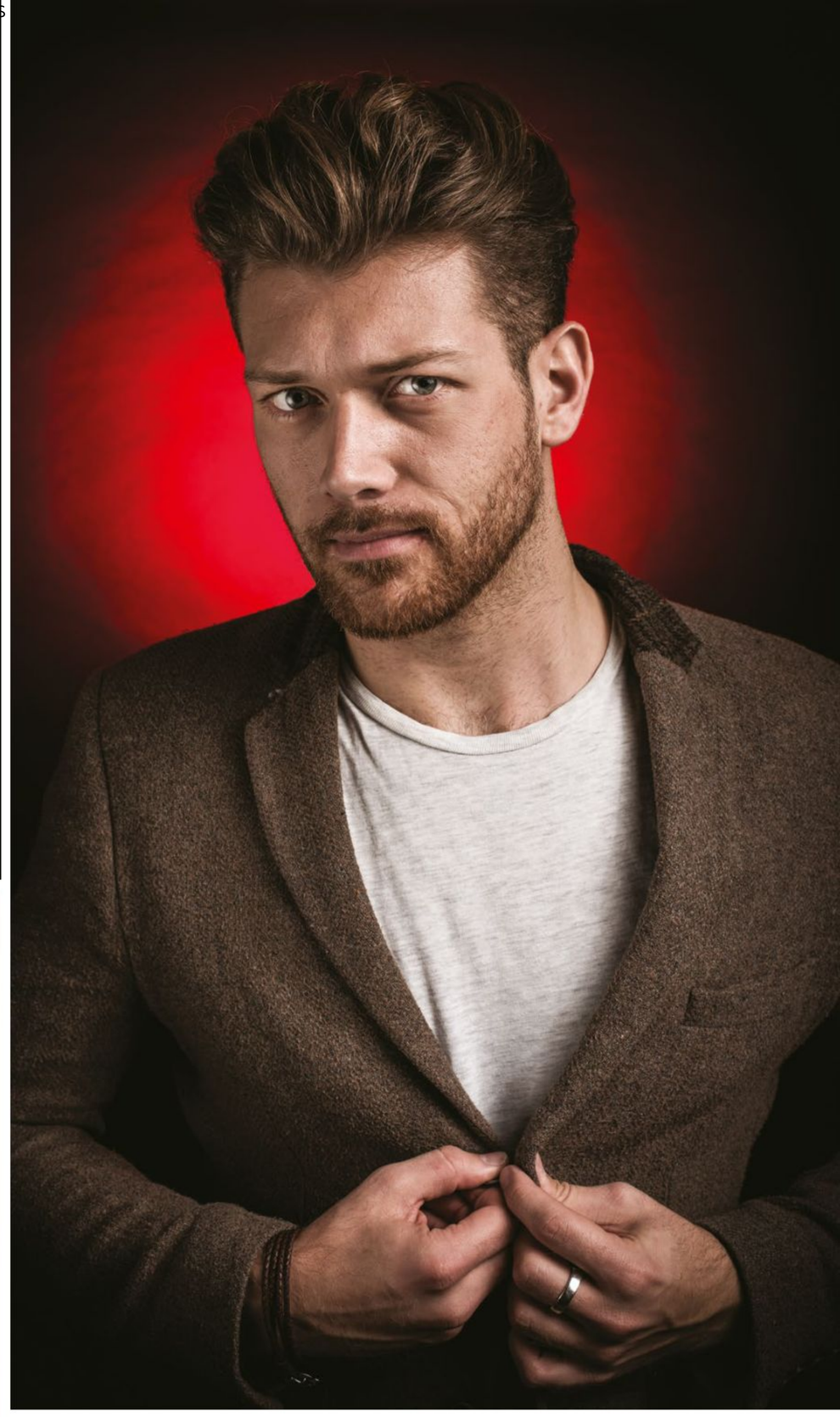
Bare feet It might sound strange, but asking your model to pose without shoes or socks will help with the openness of the shots. The bare feet create a slight vulnerability that, when teamed with casual clothing and a positive expression, will add a raw naturalness to the images.

Accessories Adding accessories to the male model's outfit is a great way to add extra interest and will help with posing him; you can have him hold his belt, for example. If you're shooting outside, try adding a pair of sunglasses to add a little anonymity to the look.

Location The location of the shoot will play a part in how natural your images are. If you are after a professional look then stick to the studio where you can play with lighting and backgrounds, but if you want to mix in a few more candid shots then consider shooting outside.

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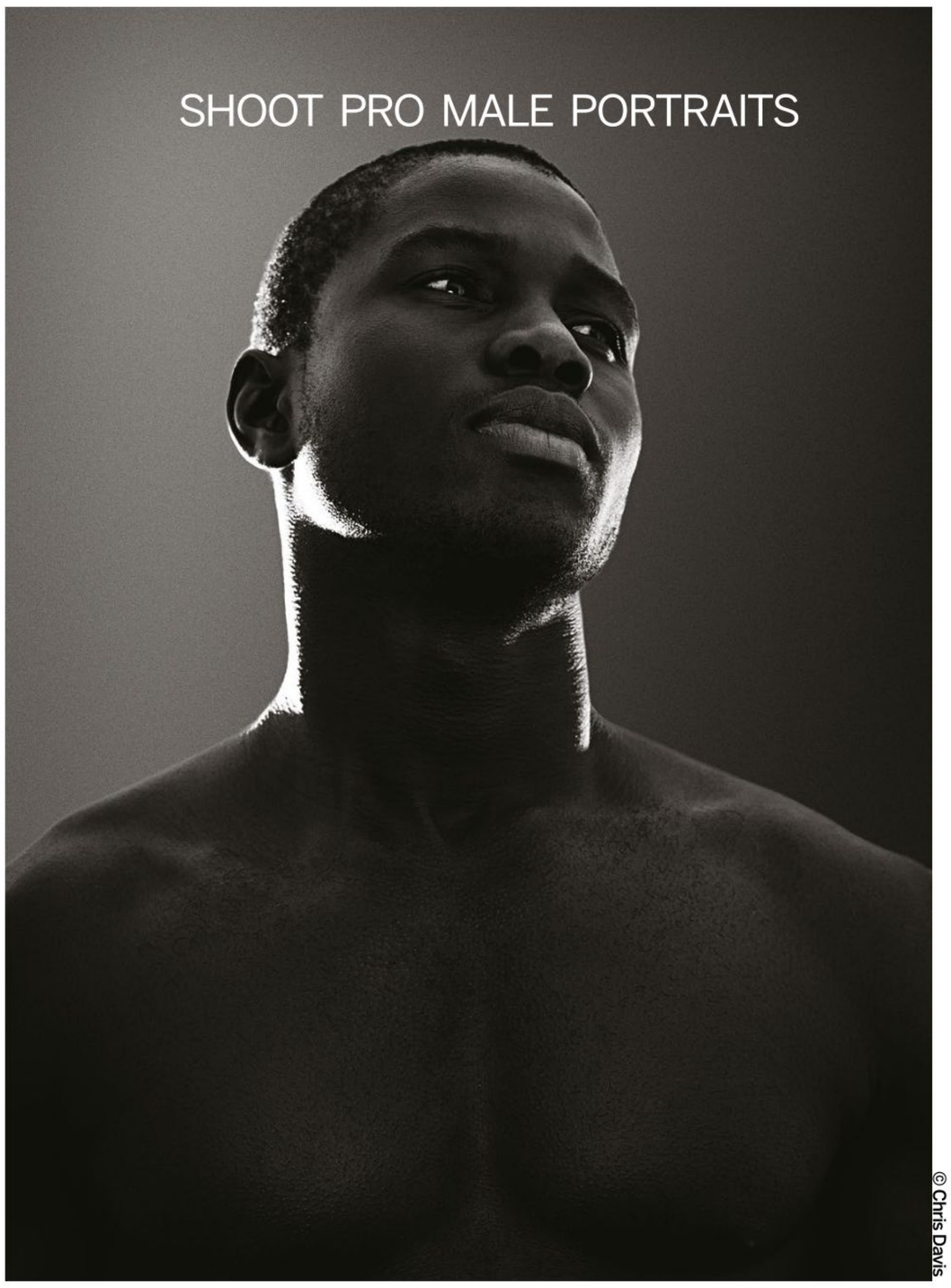




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© Chris Davis



© Chris Davis

Above
Rim-lit
Using a rim light enhances masculine features

Left
Dark and moody
Use a simple lighting setup to accentuate the jaw and muscles

PERFECT LIGHTING

How to illuminate your model for the best possible results

Lighting both men and women can be very similar, however men can generally handle much stronger lighting. A harsher setup, creating deeper shadows, will emphasise the male model's more angular features like their browline and jaw.

Men can also often handle having a lot more texture emphasised in their skin that more than likely wouldn't be a desirable look for a female model. Look for texture, angles and structures in the male body and ways to emphasise them with lighting and shadow for a masculine result.

Chris Davis explains, "I can use quite a few of the same setups for both [genders], but there are definitely a few that are more suited to men. I think with men's portraits you can get away with slightly bolder, more contrasty and shadowed lighting that for a lot of women would be too unflattering or harsh.

I occasionally use strong midday sunlight for some men that casts a stronger shadow under the brow and jawline. I also tend to use less fill and bounce light on men, but again, the desired outcome does dictate how far you can push the contrast, with commercial shoots requiring a lot more fill and light in the eyes."

The lighting for a man should not wash out the model, and you should avoid using the beauty style of lighting that is often used to light up and smooth a female model's face when you're working with a male model.

The lighting you choose will affect the overall feel of an image and will change the way the model's personality comes through. For Ian Phillips-McLaren, "it all comes down to the person in front of you... I never go to a shoot thinking I'm shooting a man today, I better shoot him with my man light! Also I never turn up to a shoot with any preconceived ideas."

TOP KIT TIPS

Discover the essential accessories needed to light men

HONEYCOMB GRID
A simple device that fits onto studio lights. It directs the light into a tight beam to limit the spill of light – really effective if you have a Rembrandt-style lighting setup.



SNOOT
A snoot is a narrow tube that fits onto the light source to create a hard beam of light, which can be used to direct the light onto a small area of the man's face, like his eyes.



REFLECTOR
Use a reflector to bounce some light back onto the male model's face in order to highlight and emphasise his more angular features.



FLAG
Use flags to prevent the light reaching certain parts of the model's body. Completely darken parts of his face using flags for a very contrasting image.



GELS
Consider adding some gels to your lights to alter the mood of your images. Team a red gel with a black background for a deep, dark and almost sultry feel.



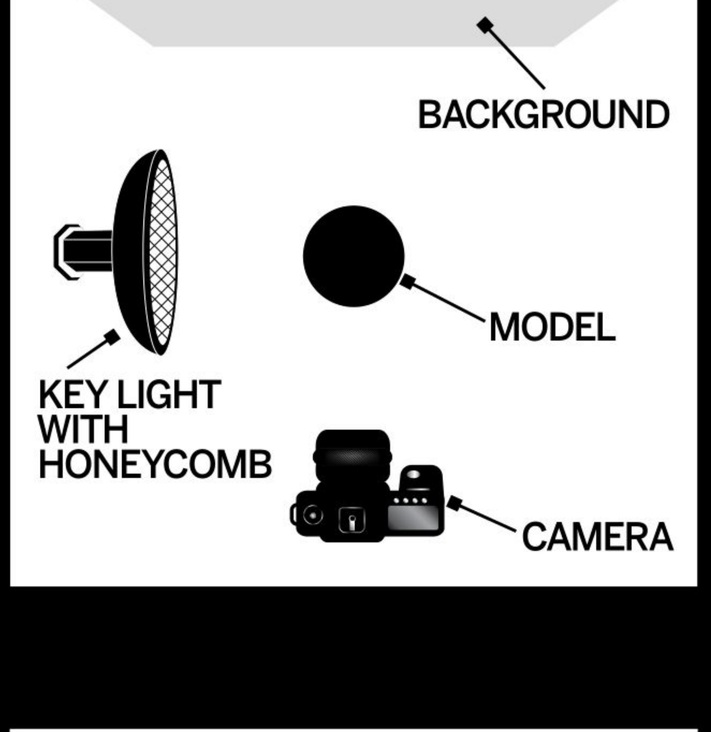
Opposite
Capture variety
By experimenting with different lighting setups, you can create a wide range of looks from dark and moody to softer and more natural

CREATE A MOODY PORTRAIT

Experiment with the lighting to create a moody portrait, then add in other lights for different effects





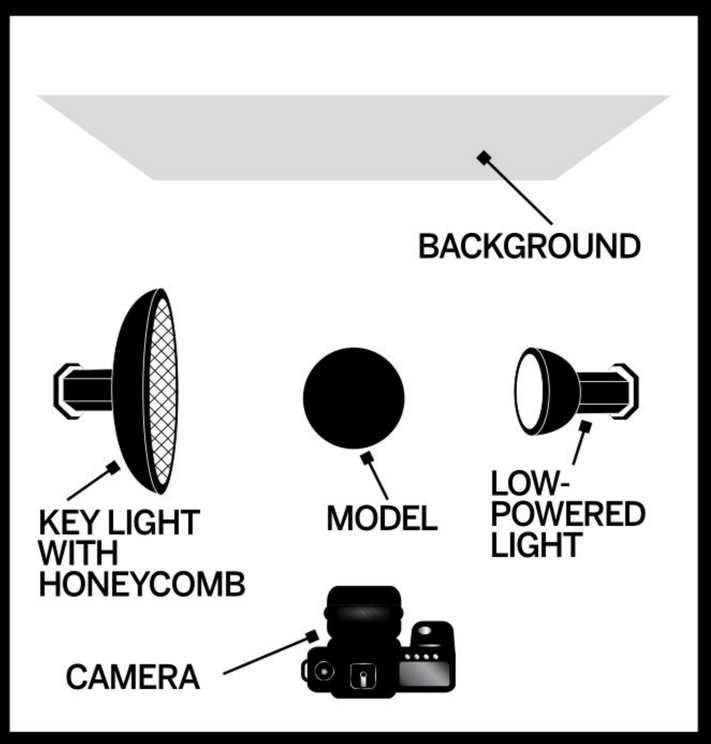


Have your model sit on a chair, then position a studio light with a honeycomb grid 45 degrees to their right. The light should be slightly above them, pointing downwards. This will light one side of their face and create the classic Rembrandt-style triangle of light on the opposite cheek.



Move the light around the side of the model to about 90 degrees. This will harshly light one side of his face, leaving the other half in deep shadow. The extreme contrast creates a very moody and dramatic portrait that perfectly highlights angular features.





Now add a second light into the mix – position it on the opposite side of your model to the other light and have it on quite a low power. This will illuminate and lift the other side of his face while still maintaining definition in his features.

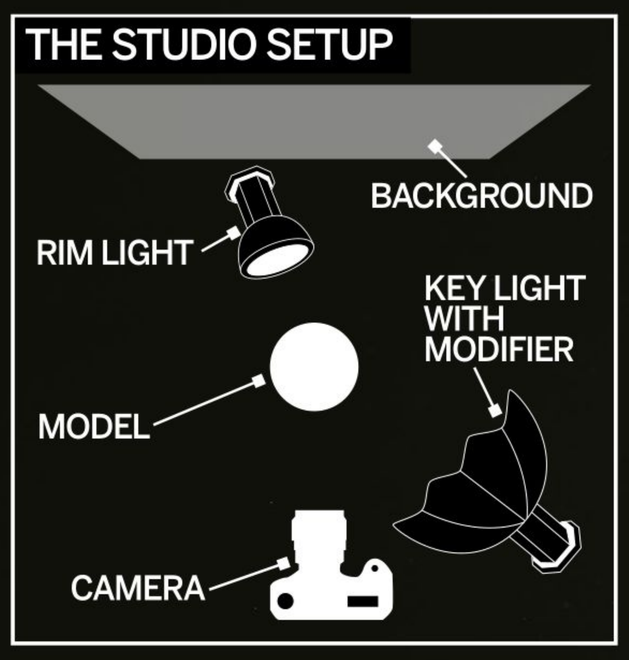
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MASTER RIM LIGHTING

Sculpt and control the shadows with a two-light setup

Use a rim light positioned behind the model paired with a studio light and a softbox, such as the Elinchrom Rotalux deep octagonal softbox, in front of him to light his face. The rim light will give him a glowing outline that contrasts nicely against the black background.

THE STUDIO SETUP





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RETOUCH AND ENHANCE

Enhance your male model in post-processing for the ultimate masculine finish

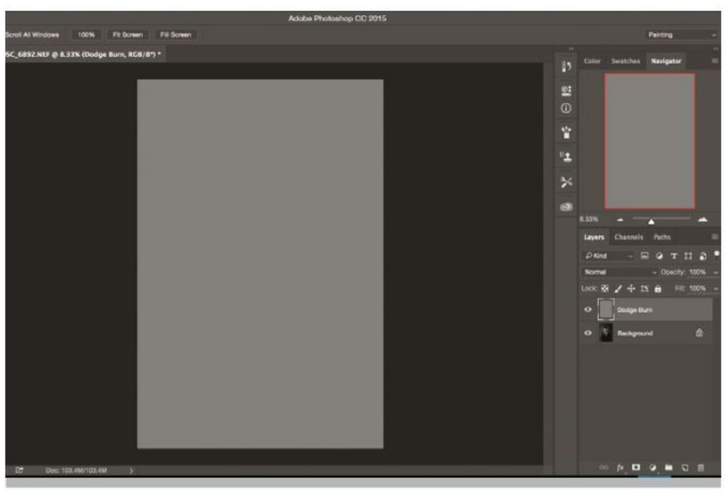
Male retouching is a very different process to retouching a female model, with the biggest difference between the two being the time and effort the process takes, according to professional retoucher John Ross (www.theartofretouching.com). "Female portraits are often scrutinised for overall beauty and the amount of detailed work put into it," begins Ross. "Retouching men is faster and easier because so many of their flaws can be let go and forgotten about."

Women, more often than not, wear make-up to cover their imperfections, and this is reflected in the way photographers will retouch them; as men don't tend to do this, some of their imperfections are often left in. When it comes to retouching a man, these features tend to be highlighted instead of hidden to emphasise a masculine and raw feel. For example, the shadows that can be seen as unflattering on a woman's face are highlighted and enhanced on a male to make him look much more rugged. John Ross explains, "Wrinkles on the brow are signs of age and wisdom. The more wrinkles on the forehead, the more he is a thinker. Therefore, the smarter he is. Another area to emphasise is the facial stubble. The more that is seen, the more rugged the man appears. In both cases, using Clarity works well because it enhances sharpening and contrast."

As previously discussed, a man's jawline is an important aspect to show off and enhance in male photography, so it is important to highlight and define it as much as possible – you'll want to go for the chiselled look for a really masculine capture. Ross says, "Use the Liquify filter to pull in any puffiness in the cheeks. Higher-contrast lighting can be used on men too, so you can push the various sliders higher and emphasise more details by simulating harsh sunlight."



1 Open the image In Camera Raw, make some tweaks like increasing the Clarity. Open your image in Photoshop and go to Image>Adjustments>Desaturate to make the image mono.



2 Make a fill layer Create a new layer. Go to Edit>Fill then select 50% Grey. Change the blend mode to Overlay – this multiplies darker areas and screens lighter areas.



3 Use the Dodge tool Select the Dodge tool and set Range to Highlights and Exposure to 10%. Paint over the areas you would like to be lighter. Be sure to build up the effect gradually.



4 Use the Burn tool Change to the Burn tool and set Range to Shadows then paint in the areas you'd like to darken. Again, build up the effect gradually until you are happy with it.



5 Adjust the Curves Go to Image>Adjustment>Curves. Adjust the Curve until the image is how you want it to look, by moving the Curve tool to the right and then down.



6 Merge and sharpen Merge all visible layers and then convert to a smart layer. Go to Filter>Sharpen>Smart Sharpen and adjust the relevant sliders to sharpen the image.

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ORIGINAL



FINAL IMAGE

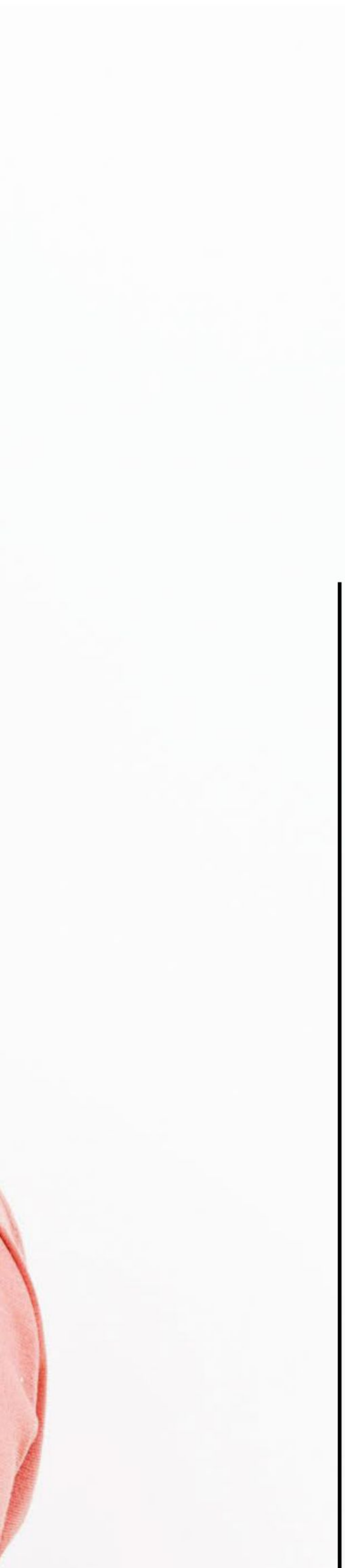
GO MONO

Converting your capture to black and white will further enhance the rugged and angular features of men. This is something that works particularly well if he has been shot with contrasty lights.

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CAPTURE FAMILY PORTRAITS

Master the art of family photography with our in-depth guide to getting the most from group portraiture

If you're like the majority of other aspiring photographers, at some point in your life you've probably had a go at capturing images of your nearest and dearest. Immortalising friends, family and relatives in photographs is something we all like to do in order to remember the special people in our lives and so that we can reflect and reminisce about them in the future. Although just about anyone can take a simple snap of the people they care about, it takes a lot more thought and skill to capture truly breathtaking portrait images. If you're looking to do just that, then you've certainly come to the right place.

Over the next few pages, we're going to be delving into the world of family and group portraiture and shedding some light on the handy tips and tricks that the professionals use. Applying what you learn to your own photography will help you to re-evaluate how you capture family photos in the future for instantly improved results. What's more, the good news is that you don't even need to have bags of expensive camera gear to capture great shots, either. All you need is a DSLR or Compact System Camera (CSC) with an 18-55mm kit lens and you're all set. With your camera in hand and our expert guide at your side, you'll soon discover how easy it can be to capture truly stunning family portraits in your own home – read on to find out how.

Left

Use a blank wall

Shooting against a white or neutral coloured wall in the family's home will give you a make-shift studio backdrop

All images © Tom Calton

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BREAK THE ICE

Creating rapport with your subject will bring out their best

As a portrait photographer, you'll quickly become accustomed to the fact that most people feel uncomfortable having their photo taken. To ensure you get the best shots possible, it's your job to make sure your subjects feel as comfortable and relaxed as possible in front of the camera. It may take a bit of practice, but once you've mastered the art of building a healthy rapport with them, you'll instantly notice the benefits.

Before you start shooting, spend a few minutes just chatting with your subject. This is a good way to break the ice and also get to know each other better. It can also be beneficial to ask them if they've ever had their photo taken before to give you a better indication as to how comfortable they're likely to be in front of the camera.

When you begin taking photos, start with some basic poses to ease your subject in. Rather than getting them to look straight down the lens, you can always get them to look off to one side to start with as this is usually less daunting. If they're with other people in the shot, ask them to look at one another as this can sometimes generate nervous giggles, which will help to relax the situation. The first few shots should be taken with the intention of getting your subject used to the situation.

Regardless of how many people are in the shot, it's important to keep up communication at all times, as any drawn out periods of silence can quickly become uncomfortable for everyone involved. Keep the conversation light-hearted and positive, while offering some advice as to how you would like them to pose for the shot. Cracking the odd joke or two is an easy way to encourage smiles and laughter.

If you're working with young children, try asking one of the parents to stand behind you and distract them with a cuddly toy or by pulling funny faces. Having someone else to do this will allow you to fully concentrate on bagging the shot.





BOUNCE FLASH FOR STUDIO EFFECTS

If you're shooting indoors and there's not enough ambient light, try using a flashgun and bounce the light off the white ceiling. Alternatively you could always try using a handheld white reflector to bounce window light back on to your subject.

FIVE TIPS FOR GREAT EXPRESSIONS

"There is no right or wrong way to capture great expressions when photographing children and families," says Jennifer Clare (www.jenniferclarephotography.co.uk). "How you go about it will depend very much on your personality. I'm quite a shy person and love quiet moments, natural smiles and thoughtful expressions. Families and children will vary wildly too, so just relax, be yourself and never force a situation; if something isn't working move on." Here are her top five tips for getting the best expressions.

1 **Capture quiet moments** Always have your camera to hand, with batteries charged and memory card ready, as these moments deserve recording just as much as high jinks and cheesy grins.

2 **Ask parents to help** For child-only portraits, the best and most used technique is having a parent behind you to chat to and entertain them. You can capture some fabulous expressions.

3 **Get their attention** Toddlers and babies are trickier...noises can work...However, something you can wave about will be more effective if you are confident shooting one handed.

4 **Use your lenses** Use a long lens to observe and capture natural interactions. Once the children are used to you, you could switch to wide-angle for a more intimate perspective.

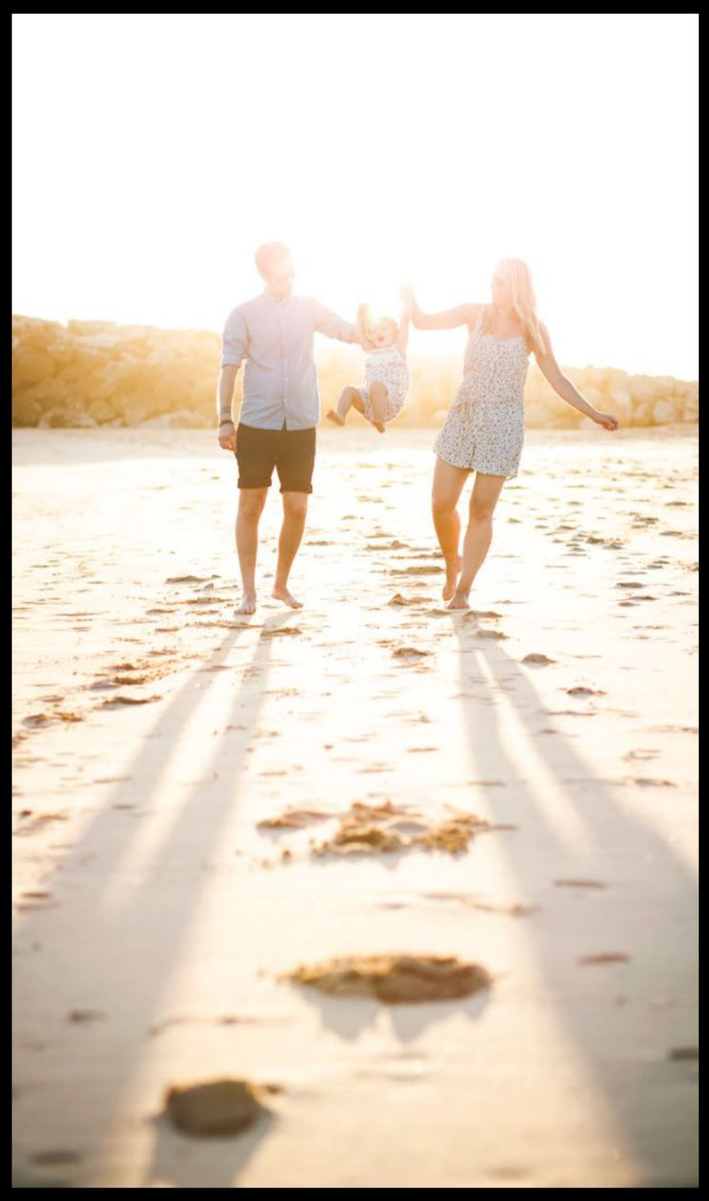
5 **Always be ready** Capture those magic in-between moments. Some of my favourite images have been created this way – when your subjects have almost forgotten the camera.



© Jennifer Clare

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CHOOSE A LOCATION

Where you decide to shoot will have a dramatic impact on your photographs, so choose wisely

Choosing a setting in which to host your family photo shoot can be a tricky decision to make. Although there isn't necessarily a right or wrong location, there are a few factors to bear in mind when making your choice. If you want to capture images with a professional-looking white backdrop, then it's often best to use a photography studio with access to off-camera flash. However, you may find that a studio can limit you as to your choice of different backgrounds.

Shooting at the family's own home is a great way to make them feel instantly at ease, though you may want to check that there is enough available space to shoot in. The final option is to venture outdoors to a local park or nature reserve – this will give you a wealth of different settings to shoot against, though, inevitably you'll be at the mercy of the weather.



Top
Bouncing flash
If the room you're in is too dark, attach a flashgun and angle the flash upwards so the light bounces off the ceiling to fill the room

Above
Use a reflector
A handheld reflector can be used to reflect light back on to your subject and remove any harsh shadows

Opposite-top
Get in close
Ask the family to hug in close for a more intimate and loving family photo

Right
Out and about
For candid family shots, head outside with the family and capture the action as it happens

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PERFECT YOUR GROUP IMAGERY

Photographing multiple people can be a tricky business, so here's our fail-safe guide to perfect group photos





HAPPY SMILES
Interacting and joking around with the group while taking the photograph has resulted in smiles all round

Photographing large groups of people can be notoriously tricky, and the more people that are in the photo, the greater the challenge it becomes. First, you'll need to think about people placement in order to ensure that everyone is clearly visible within the photo. Depending on how many people you're photographing, this can take some time to properly organise, though it's also important that you work with pace avoid the group from getting bored. To get started with, it's always best to try and place the tallest people at the back with the shortest at the front – this will generally give you the best chance of getting everyone in the photo. If there are couples within the group that would prefer to be together, then take this in to consideration and ask the smaller of the two to stand in front or to the side of their partner. If there isn't enough height difference within the group, use a chair or stepladder to stand on – this will elevate you above the crowd to get a better view.

Once you've got everyone suitably arranged, it's time to set up your camera. The key to a successful group shot is to make sure that everyone is sharp and in focus. If you're shooting a large group that is several people deep, this may require you to use a much narrower aperture, such as f11. However, using such a narrow aperture may require you to increase the ISO sensitivity in order to compensate for the reduced amount of light entering the camera – this will largely depend on how much light is available.

When it comes to focusing, it's best to lock on to someone that is located mid-depth within the group. A common mistake is to focus on a person that is situated in the front row, but this can sometimes lead to the back row fading into blur, or in the worst case, being entirely out of focus.

Once you're ready to take the photo, get everyone's attention by speaking clearly at them. Giving the group a quick countdown will ensure that everyone has a chance to ready themselves for the photo. Don't be afraid to interact with the group by cracking a joke or two as this will provoke some laughter and big smiles, which will inevitably make for a much better photo as a result.

Below
Shoot on continuous
Setting up your shooting mode to continuous enables you to keep shooting, avoiding blinks and awkward expressions

Above
Review your image
Always review your results thoroughly to make sure you've captured the best side of all of your subjects



SHOOT IN CONTINUOUS

Rather than taking a single shot, it's also a good idea to take a quick succession of images using your camera's Continuous Burst Shooting mode to give yourself the best chance of capturing a photo where no one is blinking.



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CAPTURE FAMILY PORTRAITS

CLEAN BACKGROUND
Shooting against a clean white studio background will remove any potential distractions to help draw the focus to the family

SHARP AND IN FOCUS
This shot was taken at f11, meaning that all of the family members are perfectly sharp and in focus

STUDIO FLASH LIGHTING
Using two studio flashes either side of the group has created even and attractive lighting across the entire group





Above
Theme a shoot
Be sure to give the group direction before the shoot on what to wear and the general theme of the shoot

Left
The golden hour
The golden hues generated at sunset make a stunning backdrop for any family photo shoot

Right
Think about the background
Although the focus of the shot should be on the family, don't neglect the background as this is equally as important to bagging a great shot



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Left
Keep up smiles
Once the child is awake, keep them entertained with toys and by pulling funny faces to entice out some smiles





Middle
Use a prime lens
A prime lens will offer a much wider maximum aperture than most zooms, with shallow depth of field

Above
Avoid wide-angles
Photographing a person close-up with a wide-angle will cause their facial features to distort

NEWBORN PORTRAITS

Discover what it takes to capture treasured photos of a family's newest arrival

Baby photography is arguably one of the most rewarding types of portraiture, but also one that requires a healthy dose of patience. Unlike adults, infants can't be told what to do and they won't always co-operate, so be prepared to allocate more time to it than you would with a normal photo shoot.

Usually it's easiest to work with a sleeping child, so ask the parents to try and keep their baby awake for an hour or two prior to the shoot – this will help to ensure they sleep soundly when you're snapping away. It also helps if the shoot can be planned so that it's just before the baby's feeding time. The parents can feed the child just before the shoot, which will maximise the chance of maintaining a happy baby during the shoot and encourage them to drift off to sleep.

You may think that in order to keep the baby asleep you'll need to be as quiet as possible, but in fact the opposite is true. Babies are most comfortable around constant background noise as during their time in the womb they could hear many loud noises from the outside world. Most professional baby photographers will play music throughout the shoot – usually sounds of the ocean or rain – to soothe the child.

SHOOT WIDE OPEN

When photographing one person, try setting your camera to the widest possible aperture. This will create a thick blurring effect behind and in front of them to draw the focus to them.

Once you've bagged enough shots of the child sleeping, it's a good idea to incorporate the parents as well. Asking them to hold the child and huddle in close will create an intimate family shot and it'll also help to keep the baby warm and happy. If the child wakes from its sleep, you might even be able to snap a few shots with their eyes open.

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Below
Family love
If the child is in a sound enough sleep, try asking the parents to pick them up and hold them tight for some more intimate resting shots

TRICKS FOR GREAT SHOTS

Here are our top tips to remember for perfect family portraits

1 Build a healthily rapport with your subject prior to the shoot to make them feel relaxed in front of the camera.

2 Keep up the interaction with your subject throughout the shoot so that they don't feel awkward or embarrassed at any point.

3 Bring an arsenal of cuddly toys to keep young children entertained while you take their photograph.

4 Shooting against a blank wall (preferably white) in the home will make a great studio backdrop in a pinch.

5 Open up all the curtains and let the window light flood in to illuminate your subject for beautifully lit portraits.

6 If the room is too dark, try bouncing flash on to the white ceiling to fill the room with light.

7 Head outside to a local play park and allow the young children to have fun while you capture the action.

8 When arranging a large group for a photo, remember, if they can't see the camera, the camera can't see them.

9 Use a small aperture (like f11) to ensure that large group shots are kept in focus from front to back.

10 Keep the atmosphere positive to ensure your subjects have a good time and keep the smiles coming.

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CREATE PRO PORTRAITS ON LOCATION

Find out the secrets behind shooting environmental portraits

Portraiture is a genre that comes in many forms, from intense studies of a person's physical features and form to more candid snaps of a subject living their life. Environmental portraits are studies of a person – not just their physical attributes, but their life and personality, too. An environmental portrait should tell a story and give an insight into the subject's world. They can be candid or posed, taken either inside or out, and are often characterised by a look that's almost cinematic. This compelling style can often be associated with documentary photography as well as photojournalism, and is a way of creating engaging imagery that will pull the viewer into the subject's story.

Over the next few pages, you'll discover the elements that define an environmental portrait and its purpose. You'll also learn how to perfect your composition and lighting, as well as how to achieve the best possible edit for your subject and their story.

Right
Sketch, Tattoo Fixers
"Without hesitation he just got into this position and that was the shot," explains Tom Barnes (**tombarnes.co**)

© Tom Barnes

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DECIDE WHAT TO SAY

Storytelling defines an environmental portrait

Environmental portraits are most commonly associated with the documentary and photojournalism style of photography – their purpose is to form a narrative about the subject, telling their story with just one single shot. Professional photographer Jonathan Bielaski (**jonathanbielaski.com**) says that an environmental portrait should be an image that shows a person within a specific setting, which when combined with the included details, creates a story.

Generally the subjects chosen for environmental portraits should be 'real' people with a story to tell rather than a professional model. "I see these shots as simply capturing normal people at work," explains professional photographer Donal McCann (**donalmccann.com**). "It doesn't matter what they do or how they do it, it's the ability to bring out their character within their environment that's important to me. Most of the time within my shots, the sitter's eyes tell a story. I aim to get the viewer to look at them first, then explore the surroundings."

Seth Lowe (**sethlowephoto.com**) emphasises the importance of telling a story "using a specific location and subject in conjunction with one another... It also needs to be more specific than just someone outdoors in a pretty field or cool building. When you are shooting environmental portraiture, the two – location and subject – are highly dependent on each other to make a strong image that the viewer will participate in."

Matthew Joseph (**matthewjoseph.co.uk**) explains that painting a picture of someone's world in just one image isn't easy, but worth the effort. "I think it's all about getting the subject out of the studio and submerging them in their environment. I think it needs to be honest, but through lighting and composition you can also emphasise certain characteristics to get a certain mood across. [Telling a story in just one image] is a hugely challenging thing to do, but it can be immensely satisfying. If I can meet someone for the first time in their place of work or play, and walk away having told their story in one image, then it's a success."

Your chances of success will automatically increase if the link between the subject and their environment is clear. "Showing an artist in their studio, or an actor in a theatre, can give an insight into their world and life that you can't get in a studio", says Chris Sorensen (**chris-sorensen.com**). "Putting someone in an environment they're comfortable with can relax a subject and improve the chances you'll get something real and revealing from them."

Bottom-right

David Walliams

"I was shooting alongside a TV crew so I had to jump in when they had finished their take. Shot with one light and the rest is ambient," explains professional photographer Tom Barnes

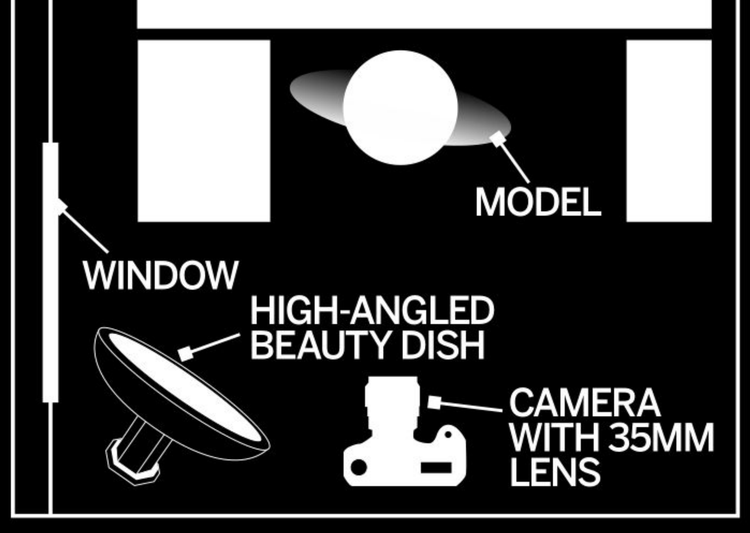


© Donal McCann

COMPOSE IN TIGHT SPACES

Find out how Seth Lowe produced this appealing portrait

For this shot (right), a beauty dish was set up high and to the left – mimicking the ambient light from the high windows in the front of the store. "The floor was so cluttered I could barely stand in the room next to my light stand," explains Lowe. "I shot at 1/60th to let as much ambient in as possible, while still staying sharp while handheld." Lowe goes on to explain, "The 35mm length is one of my favourites for environmental portraits. It's fairly close to how our eyes see a scene, and doesn't really magnify the scene in any way. A 50mm lens is very similar in that regard, but if you want to maintain focus throughout, it is harder to do at 50mm. Shooting much wider would have caused him to get lost in the scene, and not made it as much about the portrait, but more about the space. I set my aperture to f11 to help keep the entire scene sharp and just adjusted my strobe to match."



Right

A simple setup

"The beauty dish is great for these kinds of scenes, because it has a very broad light pattern with even fall off. The subject is catching the bulk of the light, but all those other areas need light to help build a story around the subject. Lighting and exposure values throughout your image are some of the most powerful ways to create composition and control the viewer's eye"



© Seth Lowe

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CREATE PRO PORTRAITS ON LOCATION

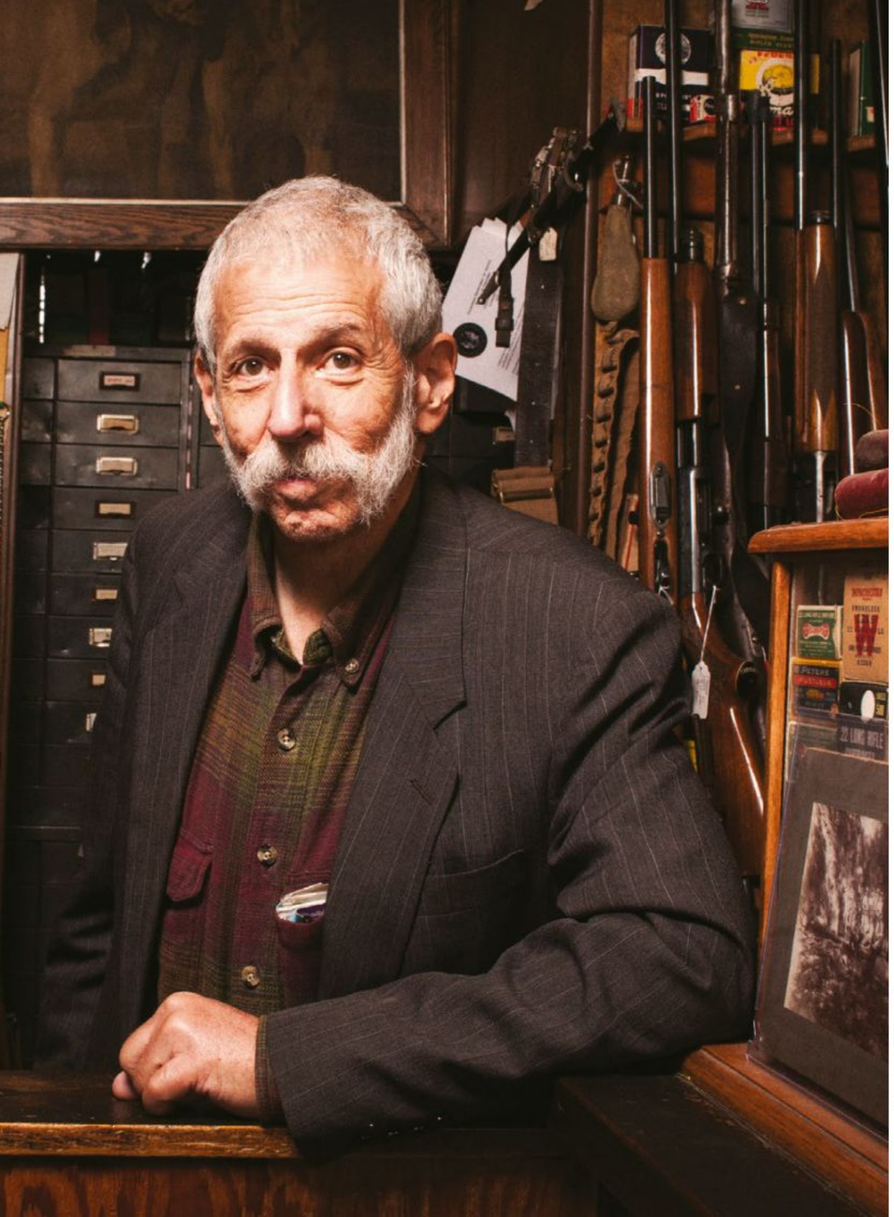
A REAL PERSON
The subject isn't a model, which really helps the image – he appears to belong in the environment shown

THE LIGHT
"There was lots of natural light from the front entrance, so we used the curtains to direct that towards Ryan," explains McCann

THE POSE
"I got Ryan to stand in for the last minute, turning his face gradually until I got the light I needed. There was a small reflector to his left side too," says McCann

STORYTELLING

"It's surprising what you can do with an interesting setting and good light. The sitter can be transformed into a guy who struggles to make ends meet by repairing furniture, to a hero figure sitting among his captivating environment," explains McCann.





© Tom Barnes

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CREATE INTERESTING COMPOSITIONS

Paying attention to the entire scene is particularly important for environmental portraits

In environmental portraits you should treat your subject like the leading actor and the background like the supporting cast – the background shouldn't be the most dominant aspect of the composition, but will still be absolutely integral to the telling of the narrative. Without the background, you'd lose the essence of the story.

The background you include in your image should reflect part of the subject's story and should not look too staged. Obviously you will be trying to create an aesthetically pleasing and balanced image, so sometimes you will have to move some things around. "I try to minimise clutter and distractions in the image, so clearing and moving things not necessary to telling the story is something I do," explains Sorensen. "Half of portrait photography is moving furniture." He also says that you shouldn't worry about the background overwhelming the subject, especially if it tells part of the story.

Environmental portraits can either have the subject looking directly at the camera or looking away at something else. This will entirely depend on the effect you want to create and the story you are telling, however, some stories will need the eye contact for connection. "The eyes are the key to the soul... so they say," says McCann. "For environmental portraits I'd agree with that. Connection is important. Building a relationship with your sitter is also critical so they know when they look through the camera, they can see me and only me. Their life, their day, their work their struggles come out through their eyes."

Lowe argues that eye contact "is not always important, but if there is no eye contact, then it needs to be intentional and well thought out. As humans we look at each other's eyes for the strongest body language cues. Photography is silent, so we are naturally going to look at the subject's eye for any cues as to what is going on both in the frame and out of it. If you want your viewer to have a relationship with the subject, then yes, it is essential. But if your image is more narrative, or about the subject's action or environment, then you can definitely break eye contact."

Your compositional approach will obviously differ depending on your subject and location. "Know the rules [of composition], but don't be bound to them," says Lowe. "The great thing about environmental portraits is that you can use the posing and movement of your subjects to manipulate the composition and focal points of your images." Think about what elements of the background are key to telling the story and compose your image around them. Ensure that you don't create a false scene that removes the essence of the story.

Including other people in the scene can be difficult, however as long as you ensure that you maintain complete focus on your subject, you should still be able to create a striking environmental shot. If you do include other people in the shot then eye contact from your subject is vital, that way the viewer will instantly be drawn to them and you won't lose their dominance in the scene.



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© Tom Barnes

EYE CONTACT

Having a connection with the subject through eye contact is key to certain stories and will help to draw the viewer into the image



© Jonathan Bielaski

LOST IN ACTION

Alternatively, having the subject look at what they are doing or off to the side can mean they look more comfortable and relaxed

LONG EXPOSURE

If you want to create an environmental portrait with motion blur in-camera, simply ask your subject to stand still, place your camera on a tripod and use an ND filter to block out some of the light during a long exposure. This ensures your image will retain its natural feel.

© Matthias Clamer/Getty

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2x © Matthew Joseph

LEARN TO LIGHT ON LOCATION

Achieving the right mix of ambient and flash is one of the key elements of successful environmental portraiture

You must consider lighting the background as well as the subject, but getting the balance right can be tricky. There are a few different approaches to lighting environmental portraits, from using only available light to a simple one-light approach, or employing a multiple light setup – there is no right or wrong way, and it will entirely depend on the look you are after and the location of your shoot.

Some photographers will only use available light. "I don't use any external lighting, at all. Just reflectors," explains McCann. "I usually visit their place of work in advance and find a location that suits. This involves some legwork, and usually a lot of moving around. Bringing an assistant is great for testing available light." This approach has pros and cons – on the one hand the lighting will be completely natural, but you might have to move your subject and re-create the scene you are after in an alternative location, which can then become too staged. A similar problem can also occur when you use too much external lighting.

The trick is to ensure that the setup you choose doesn't look artificial and that it blends in with the chosen environment. Obviously in certain scenes you will have to somewhat exaggerate the lighting, but strive for something that won't detract too much from your chosen scene. Bielaski says, "I personally use Elinchrom Quadras and speedlights, as well as tons of modifiers to mimic ambient light. All battery powered." Having portable kit is important for environmental portraits as the location of your shoot will always change. "Speedlights are really handy for this kind of thing as they're so easy to use," explains Joseph. "You can hide them easily and the zoom function can be really handy for being specific with where you are lighting."

Lowe says, "Unless I am going for a really specific look, I almost always start with one light, and build up from there. My goal in almost every portrait is to have additional lighting blend in seamlessly with the environment, so I really just try and light in the same direction as the Sun, occasionally adding fill and separation from there... Just being conscious of what kind of light is already happening in your location can help you make really smart decisions that make your final image so much stronger. Sometimes I'll stack two lights, putting a giant soft fill behind a harder key light on the same or similar axis. It lets me cover a broader scene with light and still focus on what I want, all while keeping my light moving in one direction."

WORK WITH MULTIPLE LIGHTS Use two speedlights to illuminate your scene and subject perfectly



1 Decide how to light the scene Once you arrive at your location, you must assess your lighting setup. This café was relatively bright, so we decided on two speedlights and a reflector balanced with the ambient light.



2 Attach flash triggers and sync Now secure your flash triggers to the speedlights and set them to the same channel. Before you place them into position, do a few tests to make sure they have synced up.



3 Set up your speedlights The main light was placed high up in front of the subject, just off to her left (camera right). This was angled in order to bounce some of the light off the ceiling and feather some toward the model.



4 Light the background In environmental portraits, lighting the surroundings is just as important as lighting the subject. A second speedlight has been positioned behind the model to illuminate the background details.



5 Use a reflector This has been used to bounce a small amount of the light coming from our main speedlight back onto the shadow side of the subject's face, creating a more even effect.



6 Shoot First take some test shots. You may have to alter your lighting in order to get the shot that you are after. Ensure you keep the depth of field narrow in order to capture as much of the background detail as possible.



Left
Balanced capture Using multiple speedlights has helped to capture both the environment and the model perfectly

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USE LIGHTROOM

Fine-tune your portraits with careful editing

The post-production of a portrait may involve hours of retouching and editing work, however when it comes to an environmental portrait it is important not to take your edits too far. The final image should be a truthful depiction of your subject and the scene. Err on the side of minimal editing in order to depict the truest version of your subject's story. Some photographers will do a little compositing if there are minor elements that need to be removed, but generally nothing that will radically change the essence of the scene.

"My biggest goal is to have anyone who sees my images experience what I did when I made the image, and to connect with my subject in the same way," explains Lowe. "Like lighting and composition, retouching is just another tool to do that. Often, my images just have some basic colour toning and contrast work done, but occasionally some compositing is done in order to remove distractions in the background or tweak location elements that were beyond my control."

Joseph says, "I shoot knowing how I will edit and I'm often shooting in really challenging situations, logistically and lighting-wise, with minimal time and sometimes at the mercy of the elements... There will be small bits of levels, toning, sharpening and noise added – pretty much as standard in my workflow."

Environmental portraits are very often characterised by the cinematic, colour-graded look that makes images look almost as if they are stills from a movie. Cinematic photography adds a drama and intensity to the scene captured and will enhance the lighting and mood too. The goal is to create an image that tells a story, so the cinematic look works really well and adds to the documentary feel.



Left
Before
Prior to the edit this portrait was lacking drama and impact

Right
After
The cinematic effect has added texture. If you feel certain colours are too strong, go to the HSL section and reduce the Saturation of these colours to -30. We altered Yellow, Red and Orange

CREATE A CINEMATIC LOOK

Employ the power of Lightroom to add some drama to your images



1 Increase brightness Head to the Basic tab in the Develop module. Increase the exposure to +50 and boost the contrast to +55 to enhance the brightness of the image.



2 Bring out the details To add more contrast and bring out more detail, reduce Highlights to -60, Shadows to +50, Whites to +30 and decrease the Blacks to around -20.



3 Increase clarity To reveal the detail further, increase the Clarity slider to +75, and to create more of a cinematic look, decrease the Vibrance to -30 and up the Saturation to +10.



4 Add a vignette and dehaze Set Amount to -30 under Post-Crop Vignetting in the Effects tab. Now, increase the Dehaze slider to +25 to make the shadows more defined.



5 Sharpen In the Detail tab set Amount to 40, Radius 1 and Detail 15. In Noise Reduction, set Luminance to 40, Detail 70, Contrast 25 then Color to 20, Smoothness 75.

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AFTER

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DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF CREATIVE PORTRAIT EXPOSURES

Capture incredible pictures of people using in-camera techniques

Portrait photography is one of the most popular genres among camera users. It's not hard to see why, as humans have always sought to make accurate records of those around us. However, there are times when you may want to do more than this. Instead of just creating a true-to-life representation of your family or friends – or indeed perfect strangers – you want to capture something that's far more creative.

Over the next few pages, you will discover how various creative exposure techniques can be employed to produce images that take a fine-art approach to portrait photography. You'll learn how to apply this technique not only to one-on-one model shoots but also to street photography.

We'll also cover both flash and ambient light skills, from working with mixed lighting in the studio to using long exposures and double exposures. If you're looking for ways to add extra interest to your people photography, this feature will have everything that you're looking for – and more.

Right
A different take on portraiture
Experiment with combining exposures in creative ways and you'll discover techniques for bringing fresh perspectives into your portraits

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WORK WITH MULTIPLE AND LONG EXPOSURES

Discover how these traditional techniques can be employed for creative images



The earliest photographers, who worked when the technology was in its infancy in the 19th century, would no doubt consider it ironic to find modern photographers adopting this approach to portrait photography. When you consider that slow shutter speeds were the only available option to portrait photographers back then, it's not hard to imagine that they'd find the idea of purposefully avoiding fast shutter speeds to record movement rather contrary.

There's not an awful lot of point in using a slow shutter speed without combining it with subject movement – you really need to find a way to build an artistic element of movement into your subject's pose. This technique is great for adding a surreal, dream-like effect to your portraits.

Deciding how fast or slow your shutter speed should be in this situation can be something of a minefield. If you choose a speed that's not sufficiently slow, your subject's movement won't be blurred much at all. If you go too slow, on the other hand, you'll turn any and all movements into a translucent fog with little detail on show. Hit the sweet spot, though, and you'll be able to capture silky-smooth movements that are just right for fine-art portraiture.

KEEP ONE SHARP

Combining multiple heavily blurred shots together will usually just end up in a bit of a mess. Instead, try asking your model to remain motionless for the first exposure, then add in that silky-smooth movement on the second frame for much better results.

Shooting double exposures stems back to the days of film photography, and it's a technique that lends itself particularly well to high-end portraiture. Traditionally the photographer would take a snap, then take a second photo immediately afterwards, intentionally forgetting to wind on the film. The result would be that the two exposures were combined together on the same frame to form a rather interesting meld. The downside to this technique was that the results would often be quite hit or miss – and with no way of reviewing the results until the film was developed, the photographer would be left waiting to see whether it had worked successfully or not.

Luckily, with the advances of digital photography, this technique can now be performed with much less guesswork and with a higher rate of success. Most camera manufacturers include a Multiple or Double Exposure creative shooting mode within their DSLRs, allowing you to easily replicate this intriguing effect in-camera.

Not only does this give you the advantage of being able to review the results instantly on the camera monitor, but with most of the processing done for you automatically, it also removes the hassle of merging the images together later in Photoshop.

CAPTURE DOUBLE EXPOSURES Learn the essential camera settings you need to know



1 Activate Multiple Exposure mode If your camera has a Double or Multiple Exposure mode, activate this now. On our Canon EOS 5D Mk III, it's activated by pressing the Picture Mode button to the left of the screen.



2 Adjust the settings Set the mode to Active and ensure that the number of exposures is set to two. You may have a variety of blending modes to choose from; we found that Additive provided the best results.



3 Take the photos With your model in position, frame up and take the first image. Ask your model to take up a different pose and take the second shot. A preview of the resulting double exposure will show on the rear display.

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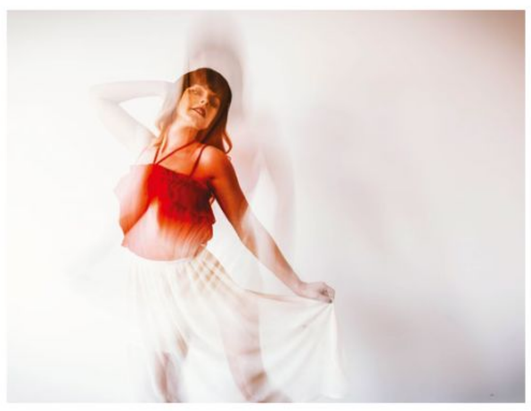
COMBINE MOVEMENT WITH MULTIPLE EXPOSURES

Create something truly abstract and evocative by using both these concepts

Both of the previous techniques covered on these pages are great tools for adding creativity to your portraits, but they don't have to be used exclusively from one another: they can just as easily be combined for a much greater artistic effect. This principle lends itself well to fine-art portraiture, as the smooth blur generated by movement within the frame, teamed with the ghosting effect of the double exposure, makes for an alluring result.



CREATE DISTINCTION
Ask your model to look in different directions for each frame, to make each still stand out within the final composite



NOT TOO FAST
Your model doesn't have to move all that fast in order to create blur, so ask her to keep the motions short and fluid for the best results

USE LONG EXPOSURES FOR ACTION

Capture artistic images of sport with Stephen D'Agostino



"Experimentation is at the core of photo impressionism," photographer Stephen D'Agostino explains. "By isolating the image this way, the subject often comes through in a way that is more true than a traditional photograph. Every subject requires consideration of an appropriate approach."

Stephen takes two approaches to get his abstract results. The first is to drag the shutter. "I almost always use Shutter Priority, and select the speed that best balances between a blurred background and a subject with meaningful gesture."

The second method is more unusual. He shoots many frames using a fast burst rate, then combines these in Photoshop. "When shooting an opacity blend, I use automatic exposure."

www.dagostino.ca



2x © Stephen D'Agostino

1 The right kit "I use a neutral-density filter to allow for proper exposure. In some cases, the camera is handheld, using a Gyro for stabilisation."

2 Shutter Priority mode "I generally use Shutter Priority to avoid losing an image to exposure issues. The faster the subject, the faster your shutter."

3 Camera movement "To hold your subject in the same relative location in your viewfinder, you must anticipate the subject's movement."



Opposite-top
Isolate the movement
Asking your model to limit movement to one area of her body will allow parts of her to remain sharp, and prevent the entire photo from becoming an unidentifiable blur

Opposite-inset
Take the shot
Locking off your camera on a tripod, on the count of three ask your model to move across the frame, depressing the shutter as she does to capture the movement

Left
Experiment with distance
Don't be afraid to get closer or further away from your subject between frames. This difference in size can often help the two images blend better

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CAPTURE ARTISTIC STREET PORTRAITS

Discover how slow shutter speeds can be used to blur a crowd

Although the notion of conveying movement within a still image may seem a little counter-intuitive, using slow shutter speeds in order to do this is a technique that has been employed by throughout photographic history. The swirling patterns and textures that a moving object creates as it passes through the frame is a guaranteed method of adding drama and intrigue to your work.

Of course, there are two clear options here. The first is to have your subject form the basis of the movement; the second is to include movement around them. This latter method, with a striking figure in the foreground that remains sharp and crisp while passers-by blur around them, can be a potential recipe for portraiture greatness.

Sounds complicated? Well, you might be surprised to hear that it isn't as hard as it seems: it just requires a willing subject, a few key pieces of equipment and a good location.

On the equipment side of things, you're going to need a solid tripod. Locking off your camera so it's stable is what's going to be certain that all non-moving elements remain sharp and blur-free whilst using a long exposure. As for the location, you'll need somewhere with plenty of foot traffic that will rush past your subject in a continuous stream – your nearest city centre during the lunchtime rush is usually a sound choice.

Above

Shoot long

Using a telephoto lens will allow you to gain distance between you and the model, making it easier for passers-by to enter the frame

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENTAL PORTRAIT Use passers-by to frame your subject on the street



1 Use a tripod As you're going to be using a slow shutter speed to capture the blurred movements, locking your camera off on a tripod is key for this technique: it'll allow prevent camera shake from ruining the shot.



2 Slow the shutter Switch the camera to Manual mode (M). Set the shutter speed to around 1/4sec and adjust the ISO to its lowest sensitivity, e.g. ISO 100. Close the aperture to the smallest setting possible for your lens.



3 Take the shot Ask your model to stay as still as possible during the exposure, then wait for passers-by to enter the frame and take the shot. Check the result – if it's over-exposed, you may need to use an ND filter.

CREATE CROWD PORTRAITS

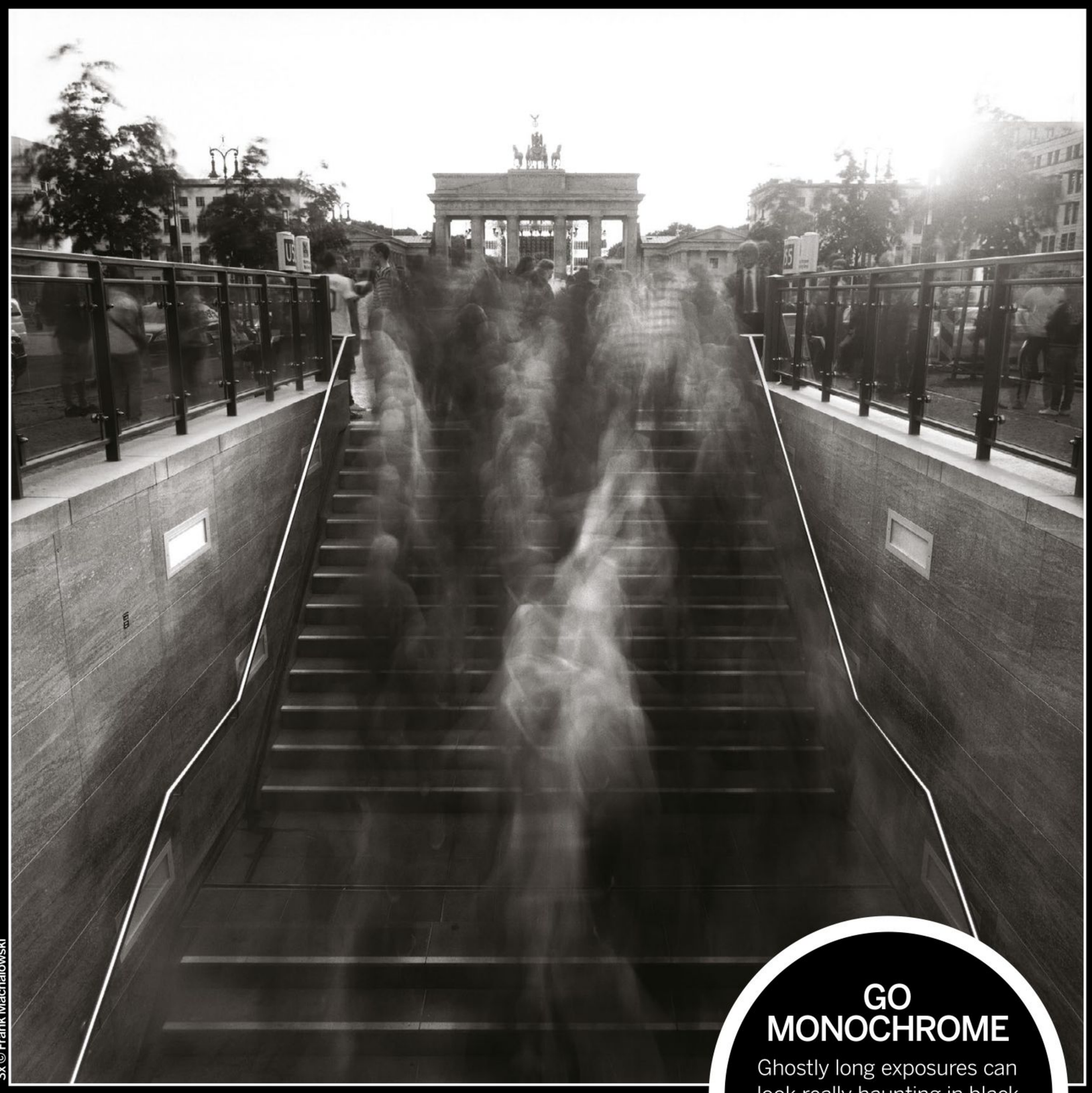
Photographer Frank Machalowski shares the making of his long-exposure series ‘Monster’



A portrait doesn’t have to feature only one person. Photographer Frank Machalowski is a master at capturing highly evocative images of crowds of people, and he does it by making use of long exposures. “In these masses, every kind of individuality is gone,” he explains.

“I start the preparation by searching for events which will attract many spectators. If I don’t know the place, I visit some days or weeks before it starts. I’m looking for unusual architecture and landmarks, and places wherever people come together.”

www.machalowski.de



3x © Frank Machalowski

TRY THE TECHNIQUE

Learn to capture long exposures of crowds in a few simple steps



1 Find a spot Mount your DSLR on a tripod. Aim to set up where there’s a constant footfall. Think about how the lines of people will lead viewers around your frame.



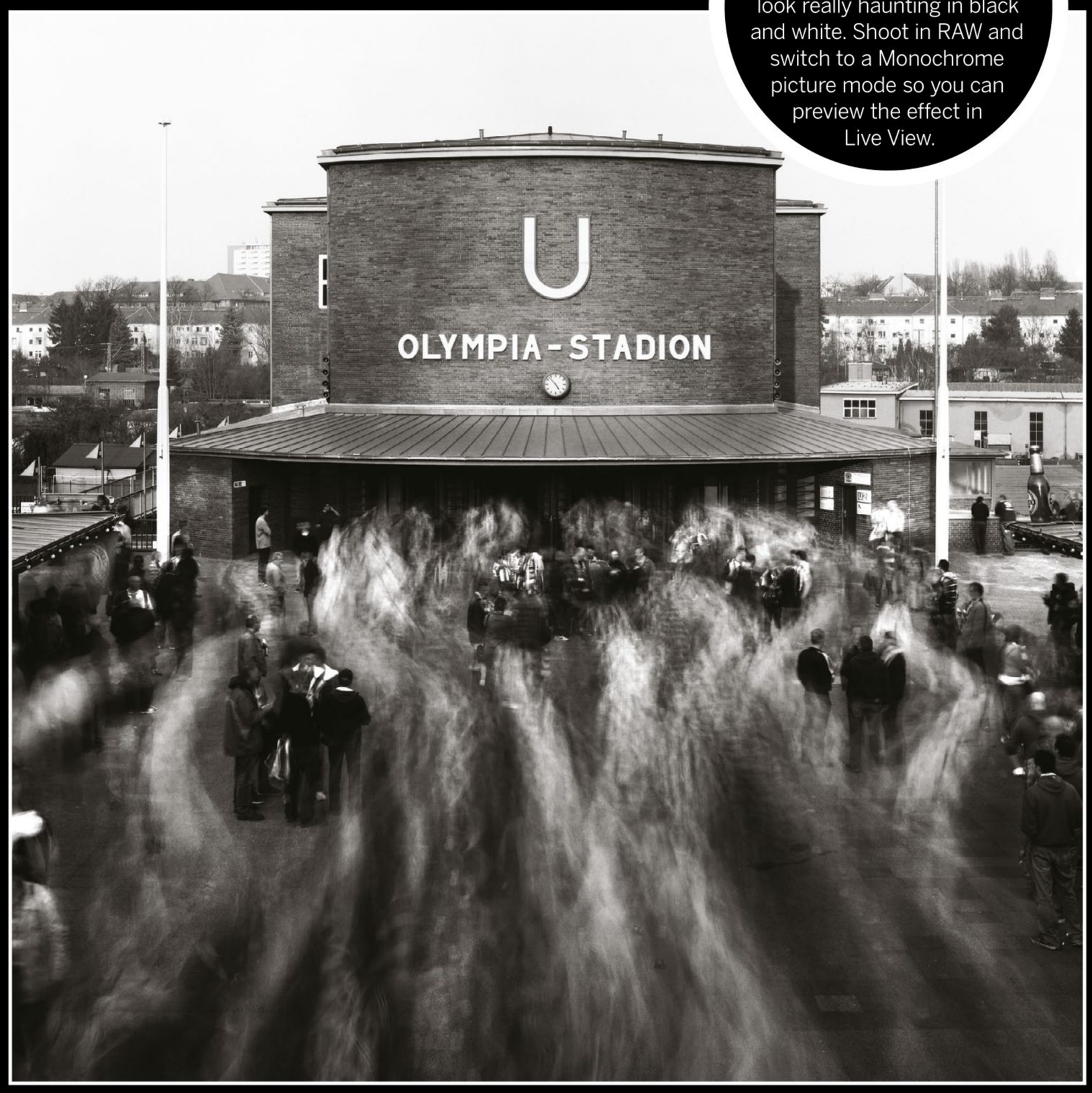
2 Camera settings Use Manual exposure mode. Set a low ISO, then choose a narrow aperture like f22. Note the shutter speed the camera gives you at a correct exposure.



3 Add the filter Fit your ND filter on the lens. Change the shutter speed to compensate – an exposure calculation table helps here. Fire the shutter remotely or with a self-timer.

GO MONOCHROME

Ghostly long exposures can look really haunting in black and white. Shoot in RAW and switch to a Monochrome picture mode so you can preview the effect in Live View.



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MASTER CREATIVE FLASH EXPOSURES

Go beyond ambient light for strikingly dramatic portraits using speedlights

If you've ever experimented with flash photography, you'll already know that the bright pulse of light emitted from your flashgun has the ability to freeze motion. So, how do you incorporate flash while also maintaining a sense of movement and speed within your shot?

Well, there are two techniques that are designed to specifically to create the illusion of movement: stroboscopic flash and slow-sync flash.

Stroboscopic flash can only be used with flashguns that have a specific stroboscopic mode, which allows the flash to operate like a strobe light, producing a series of intermittent light pulses. When you use this to shoot a moving subject as they move across the frame, they will appear to 'freeze' in place each time the flash fires.

KNOW YOUR SPEEDLIGHT

Not all units will have a built-in stroboscopic flash mode, so if your flash doesn't you can simulate this effect but simply pressing the Test Fire button repeatedly to fire the flash in quick succession. However, be careful not to overheat your flash!

Slow-sync flash, on the other hand, allows you to fire the flash while using a slow shutter speed. Placing your subject in front of a set of bright lights (such as street lights) and quickly moving the camera from side to side as you take the shot will allow you to keep the model sharp in the frame, thanks to the flash.

The twinkling lights behind your subject, meanwhile, streak and blur to create a rather striking, artistic effect.

Below

Shutter drag with flash

Combining a slow shutter speed with flash seems somewhat counter-intuitive, but it's a great way to create some stunning light trail effects

Below-inset

Twinkling lights

The key to this technique is location. Position your model with plenty of light sources behind them – street lamps, car lights or neon signs all work well

Opposite

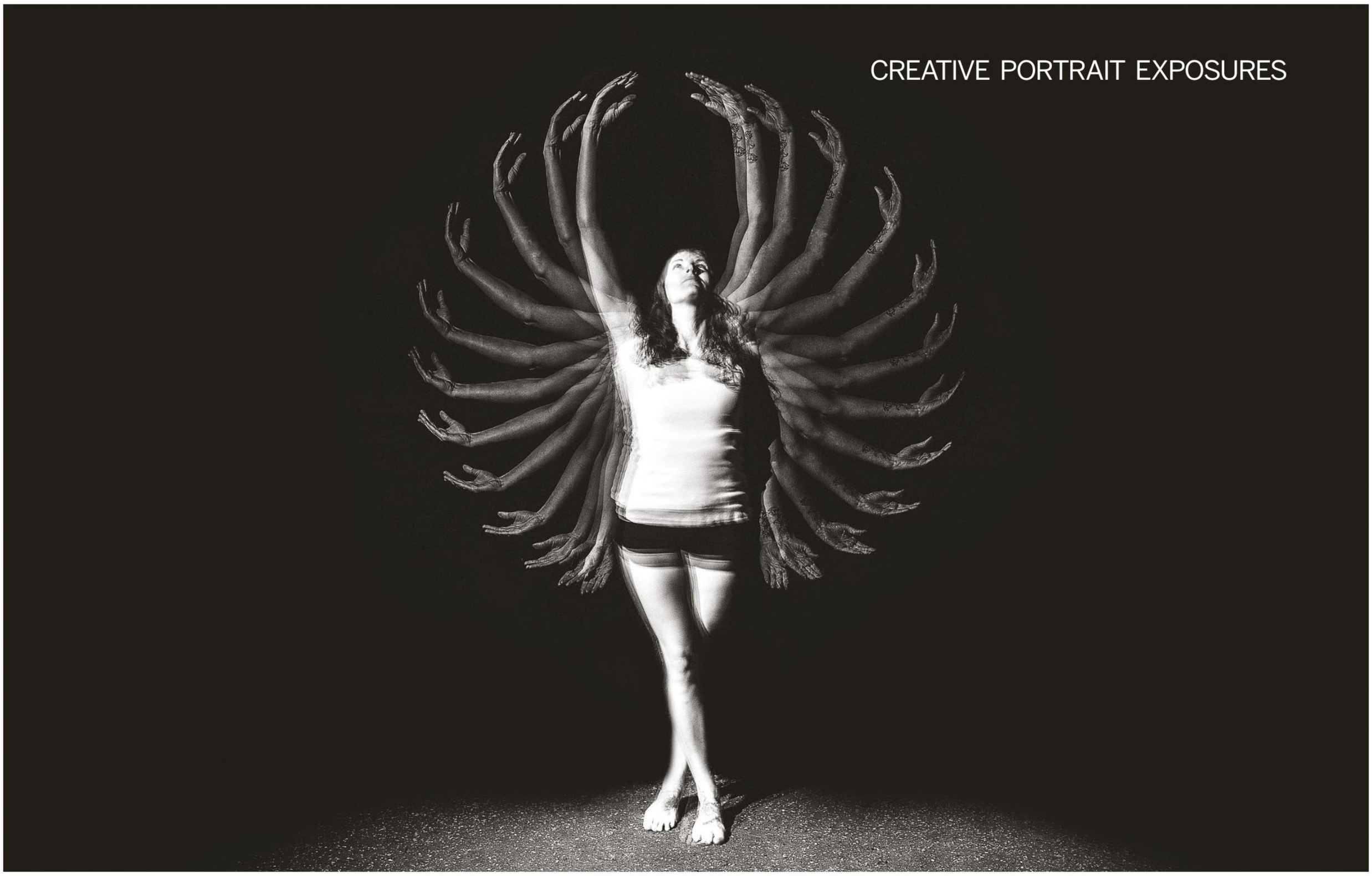
Try Stroboscopic flash

Triggering multiple blasts of light using your flashgun allows you to imprint a sequence of movements within a single photograph





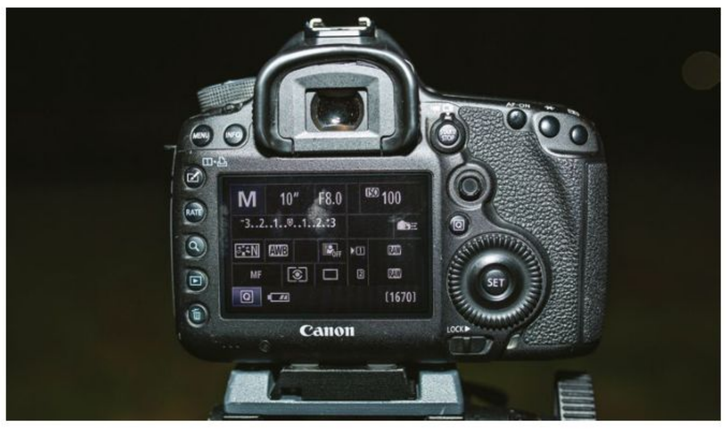
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CREATE A STROBOSCOPIC FLASH PORTRAIT Set your speedlight to fire in rapid succession



1 Use a tripod This photo needs to be taken in a really dark location – either in a studio or outside at night, away from street lights. Mount your camera on a tripod to ensure that it remains in one place during the exposure.



2 Dial in the exposure Switch the camera over to Manual mode (M) for total control. Set the ISO to 100 and the shutter speed to around 10 seconds, then close the aperture down to f8.



3 Use Stroboscopic flash mode Check your flashgun has fresh batteries – you're going to need plenty of power! Turn on the flash and cycle through the modes until you get to the Stroboscopic setting.



4 Fine-tune the settings Switch the frequency to 6Hz (this determines how fast the series of pulses will fire). Set the total number of flashes in the sequence to 10, and finally set the power output to 1/16th.



5 Pre-focus the camera Your camera may struggle to focus in the dark, so use a torch to illuminate your model and auto-focus on them. Once they are sharp and in focus, switch the lens to MF (manual) to stop it re-focusing.



6 Take the shot Hit the shutter button to start the exposure. Point your flashgun at the model and signal them to move on the count of three. Hold the Test Fire button on your flashgun until the flash sequence ends.

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MASTER CREATIVE STUDIO PORTRAIT EXPOSURES

Learn how to capture truly stunning works of art with mixed lighting

You can apply similar flash photography techniques to the ones discussed on the previous page to your studio-based work, as Julia Kuzmenko McKim (**juliakuzmenko.com**) explains. "A few years ago, I saw some new work published by my friend, fashion photographer Aleksey Dovgulya (**betweentheseconds.com**). I was hypnotised by the mix of colours and lighting effects that I couldn't quickly break down based on my knowledge of studio lighting. I was even more intrigued after Aleksey told me it was all created in-camera! Those stunning images were a result of a technique called mixed lighting, where strobe lighting is combined with continuous light sources and longer exposure times.

"At a minimum, you will need a source of continuous light (a video light or the modelling light of your strobes), and a strobe or a flash. Barn doors will help you control your continuous light. If you are using the modelling light of your strobe, you need to be able to turn off the flash light on it, so it does not get triggered your main strobe. You will also need to turn off the modelling light on your main strobe. In other words, your continuous light source's contribution is only a continuous light, and your strobe's contribution is only a flash.

"Both Aleksey and I have the following standard camera settings for all our studio shoots: ISO 100 (or 200 on some cameras), shutter speed at 1/160sec and aperture at f8 for portrait, beauty and fashion shoots; we will close it down a little further for some of our examples to increase the depth of field.

"You need to make sure no light unrelated to the set gets onto your camera sensor – so the darker it is in your studio, the better. Turn off all of the bright lights in the studio and take a test shot at f11, 1/160sec and the lowest ISO of your camera. If you get a completely black frame, it means whatever supporting light you may have in your studio – a lamp in the changing area, or the light emanating from your computer screen – it doesn't get picked up and won't interfere with your shoot.

"For your lighting setup, however, you need some controlled continuous light to get onto the sensor. Set two continuous light sources on both sides of the model, pointing them at her dress, and take test shots, gradually increasing the shutter speed to 1/2sec, then to 1sec, and then to 2 seconds, depending on the results.

"The amount of blur you will be capturing depends on how bright your continuous light sources are and your camera movement, as well as how reflective the model's outfit is.

8 ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR ADVANCED MIXED LIGHT

- Be sure to turn off image stabilisation on your camera and lens for shooting with this lighting setup.
- Remove as much ambient light from the studio as possible.
- Normally, when strobes' modelling lamps are used as continuous light, we have them set to full power; but if the modelling lamps are too strong and you see that you are starting to overexpose even at 0.5sec, you need to turn the power of the modelling light down.
- Don't use black or non-reflective outfits for this setup, because those fabrics will simply absorb the light.
- When you're shooting with mixed lighting, move and shake your camera in various directions to get different interesting results.
- Use a diffusion filter on your main light source to soften the model's face.
- Longer shutter speeds will allow you to create more blurred cloud-like effects.
- For a smooth flowing blurred flame-like effect, we recommend using colourful tulle. It is a great fabric to use as a gown, as it is translucent.

Bright and vivid hues in the model's outfit will add colour to those blurry effects.

"During the exposure you can shake, jerk, circle your camera. Every type of movement will create a different light pattern, and you can get something very cool-looking. Also try zooming in and out while the shutter is open.

"Now let's consider the main light. We used a strobe with a beauty dish and a 20-degree grid on [in the full length image opposite], not very far from the model's face to make sure the flash light does not illuminate anything else but the model's face and the upper half of her body. Find the correct power output on your strobe that will yield the correct exposure with the given camera settings. One of the important nuances in this technique is the difference in colour temperatures of the light sources we are using. To avoid a yellowish colour cast in our shots while using the modelling lights, the camera's White Balance was set to 2,800K, which is close to the Tungsten White Balance preset in most digital cameras. Because of that, if we simply added the strobe light into this set, it would look very blue. So, in order to colour-correct it, we added a colour-conversion filter that changes Daylight to Tungsten onto the main flash light. This brings the colour temperature of all of the light sources in the set to match the White Balance setting in the camera.

"You could use filters on your modelling lights to bring their colour temperature to Daylight, but the lamps tend to heat up and may melt your filters if you leave them on for too long."

Adding some colour behind the model is a good idea, too. This can be directed at the backdrop itself, as in the bottom-left example opposite, or directed at the model, as in the full-length image opposite. "[A strobe is] on the floor right behind the model pointing at the bottom of model's dress, [with] a blue gel. We'll set it to a slightly lower output power – about a full stop under our main light." Leaving the modelling light on for this strobe means that what McKim describes as "some sort of a colourful flame effect around the dress" can be achieved.

You may need to tweak the exposure, explains McKim. "With all those lights added to the set, there might be a little too much blur. If that's the case, simply decrease your shutter speed slightly. Once all your lights are set and tested, you can start shooting and working with the model."



2x © Julia Kuzmenko McKim



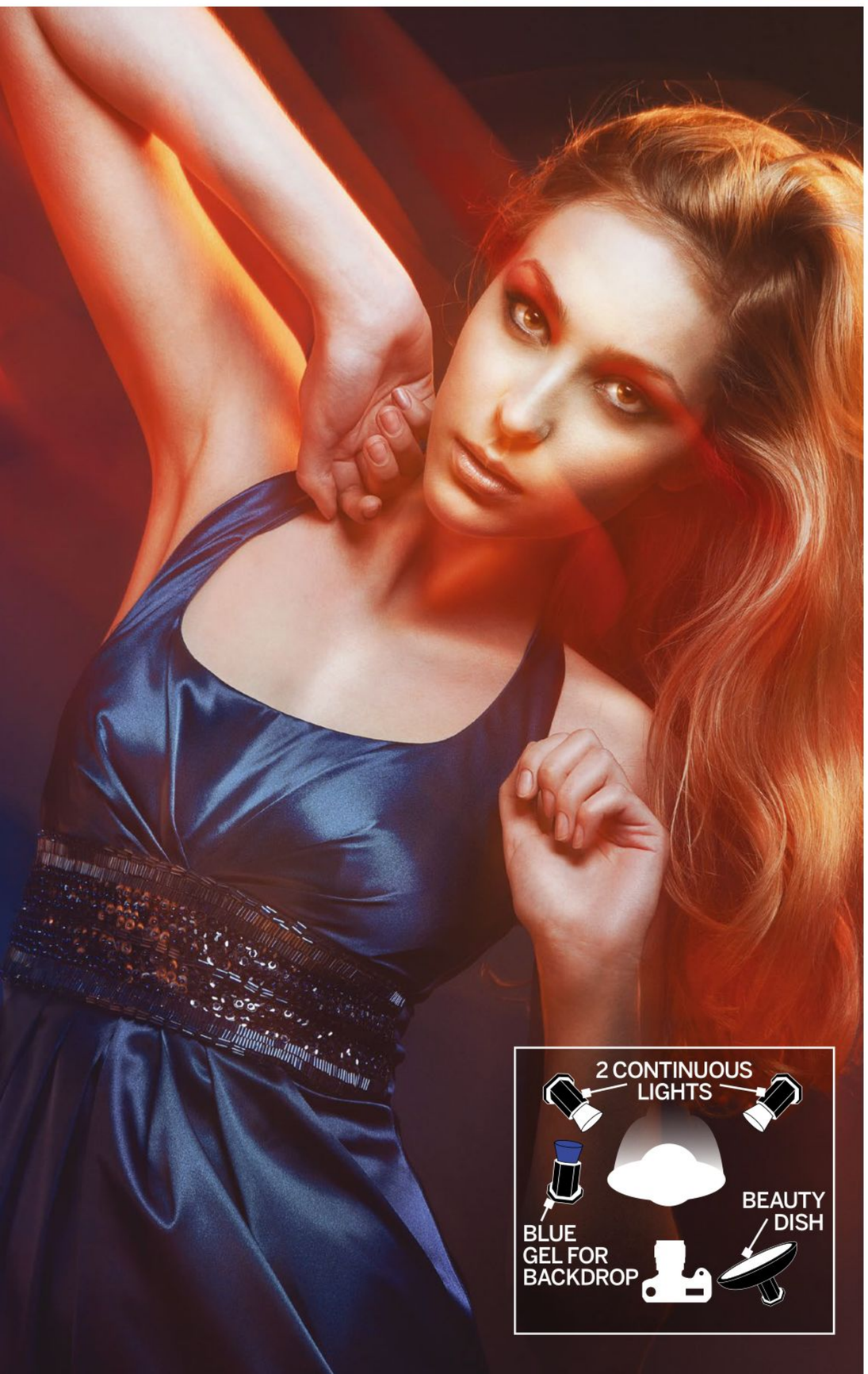
Top-right
Basic setup
The exposure settings here were f9, 1/2sec and ISO 100. Photographed with one strobe (beauty dish) as a main light and a continuous light source behind the model, camera left

Bottom-right
Four light setup
The exposure settings were f11, 1sec and ISO 100. Photographed with one strobe (beauty dish) as a main light and two continuous light sources behind the model, camera left and right

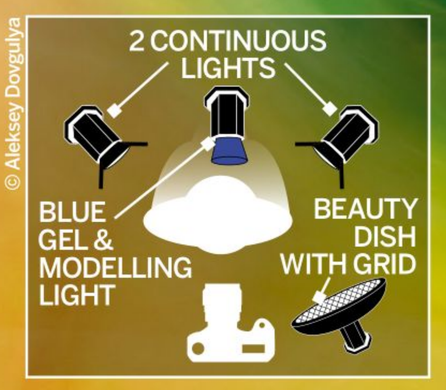
Far-right
Backlit translucent fabric dress
The exposure settings here were f11, 1sec and ISO 100, with the WB set to Tungsten. Photographed with a strobe (beauty dish with a grid and 204 Full Orange conversion gel) in front of the model, two continuous light sources with barn doors on both sides and one behind the model's dress

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Discover more about Julia and Aleksey's mixed lighting technique at **masterbeauty photography.com /gpsb**



© Aleksey Dovgulya

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CAPTURE PORTRAITS WITH GELS

Take your portrait photography to the next level by making creative use of coloured gels

Portrait photography can be tricky at the best of times, and it can be hard to ensure that your portraits stand out from the crowd. If you are after a more creative look, coloured gels are the perfect answer. When used correctly, they will enable you to completely transform an ordinary capture into something that looks high-end and professional, and will be sure to get your imagery noticed.

In film photography gels were often used to mimic the sunset or sunrise, and are widely used in movies to change the time of day and ambience of a scene. In more recent times, however, their use in photography has become more daring, artistic and perhaps a little garish (albeit in a good way). They are now more often used for creative effects and are employed by fashion and beauty photographers for unique and edgy imagery.

Over the next few pages you'll discover when and how to use gels for the best results, how the colour you choose will have a huge impact on your imagery and how to get your exposure just right. You'll learn their uses in the studio and on-location as well as some essential editing tips and tricks to ensure your final images are the best that they can be.

Right
High-end colour
Add coloured gels to your portraits to create a professional and high-end capture

© Felix Barjou

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GET TO GRIPS WITH GELS

Discover how and when to use coloured gels to upgrade your portrait photography

Gels can be used for two reasons – for technical colour correction or for creating something a little more artistic. If you want to correct or alter the colour temperature in a scene you can choose to use a colour temperature orange gel (CTO) or a colour temperature blue gel (CTB) with your chosen light. CTB and CTO gels can be used to alter the mood, to intensify the cold light or to neutralise the colours in a shot.

Gels can be placed over studio strobes or used with speedlights and come in a wide array of colours. Traditionally gelatine was placed over lights to alter their colour, which is why they are called gels, however now they are usually thin sheets of polycarbonate or polyester. Some glass variants are often used, but these tend to be more expensive and come in a lesser variety of colours.

"I love using coloured gels in portrait photography because it adds an extra dimension to what might be an otherwise fairly ordinary image," explains professional photographer Geoff Jones (**www.threevisual.com.au**). "It can also give the image a somewhat surreal feel. I love experimenting with different colours and seeing what I get." Talented photographer Gabriel Nita (**gabrielnita.com**) says, "I like to play with the coloured gels in order to add depth and contrast to images, and to make them more visually interesting. It's also a quick way to add variety during a shoot – there are endless combinations you can try."

Understanding colour theory is important and when it comes to combining colours in a scene, complementary colours are a good place to start. "The most important part of using gels is having a colour wheel available at all times," says professional shooter Oisin Vink (Instagram: **@oisinvink**). "The most basic harmony you can use to start off with would be complementary colours – meaning two colours that are opposite each other on the colour wheel. This is a great way to practise, since you'll only be using two gels. Orange and light blue are a classic combination.

"An interesting way to create contrast in an image is using a triad of gels for your palette (colours that are evenly spaced around the colour wheel in a triangle). Yellow, cyan and magenta are my personal choices when experimenting with this.

You could also decide to use an analogous palette – meaning three colours that are beside each other on a colour wheel. This tends to create a calming mood in an image, although the colours will bleed into each other more and look less defined. Yellow, orange and red would be the perfect example.

"Potential colour combinations are endless, but having a basic knowledge of colour theory is crucial to producing a successful shot. Stick with your trusty colour wheel and you can make anything work. You can also research the Goethe wheel or Illustrator's colour harmonies if you feel limited by RGB palettes intended for digital imaging."

USE AN APP

"There are some great free apps that will show you what combinations will work," explains Vink. "You can also visit **color.adobe.com** and create your own palettes, or upload images to check the colour palette."



© Geoff Jones

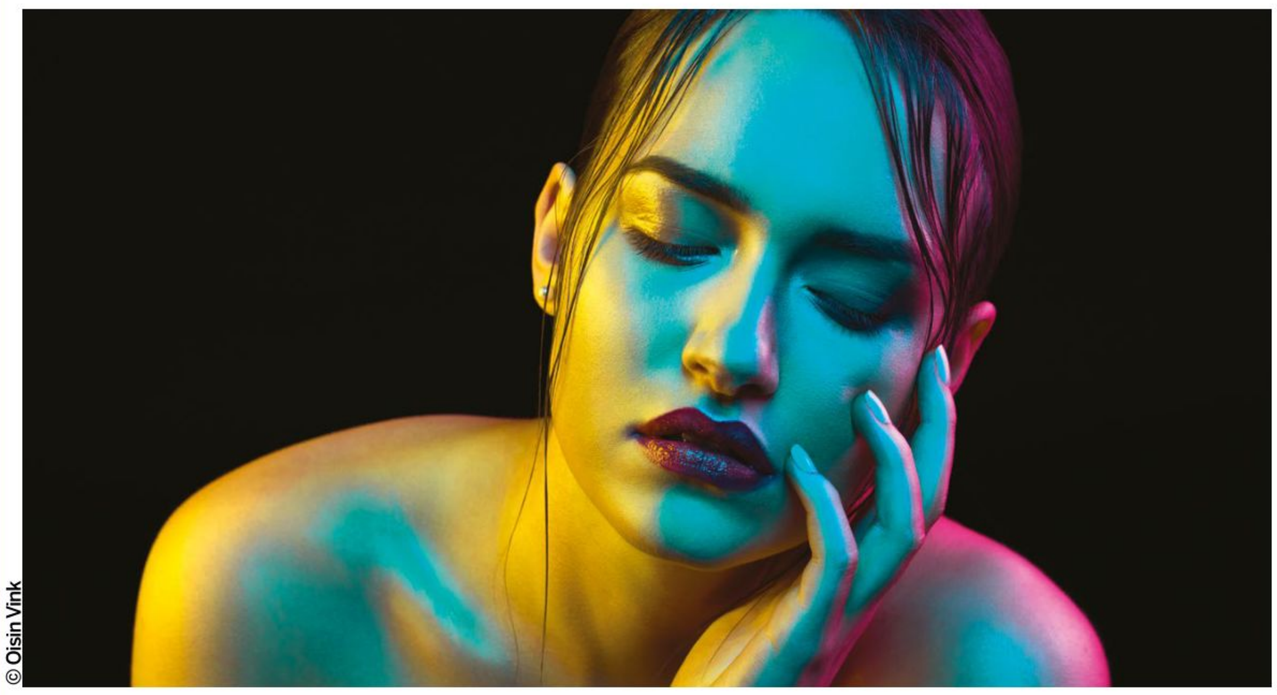
PERFECT YOUR EXPOSURE

The colours you produce will be affected

Exposing for gels can be tricky as it isn't just a case of relying on metering and of course a lot depends on the kind of look that you are aiming to achieve. The whole point of using gels is that there isn't a strict right or wrong; it's all about your own judgement of what looks good to you. If you are looking for a deep, saturated colour, you will probably need to close down the lens aperture by a couple of stops, e.g. from f5.6 to f11. Reducing the power of the light is another option. Other lights in your shot will affect the exposure and colour of your gels – try to minimise the spill of light by using flags or another diffuser. "It's always helpful to test the correct setting for your key light first, and then add additional lights one at a time," explains Oisin Vink (Facebook: **@oisinvinkphotography**).

"I find when shooting with gels, I always use a lower power output than normal, due to the intensity of the colour. Choosing the wrong stop and overexposing a portion of your image will result in a flat whole-colour appearing, which destroys facial features."

"I tend to work by feel and sight – if it doesn't look right, then change it. Gels appear more washed out the brighter the light is for any given exposure level," explains Jones.



© Oisin Vink

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"Peacock blue (teal) is probably my favourite gel colour. When used with a warmer orange tone, it looks fantastic," says Jones. "It works well as they are complementary colours on the colour wheel. The contrast of warm and cool light is very pleasing to the eye... Try to avoid combining blues and greens on their own, as the result tends to look murky."

Left

Balance

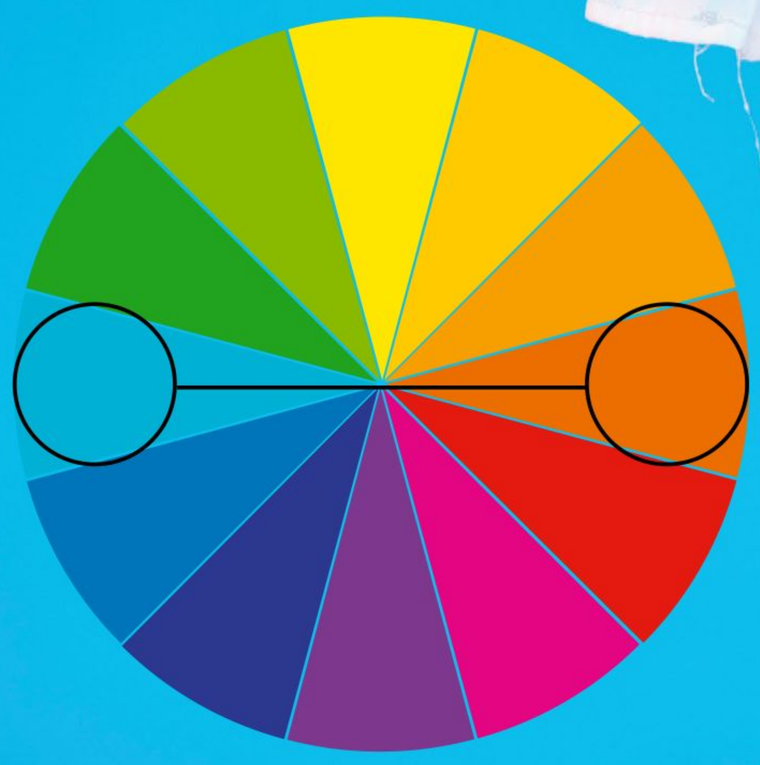
Using complementary colours is essential for producing high-end and balanced captures. Cyan and orange is one of the most popular combinations

© Felix Barjou

Inset

Use opposite colours

Colours that sit opposite each other on the colour wheel are the most effective way of adding contrast



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USE GELS IN THE STUDIO

A controlled environment is ideal for creativity with colour

The most controlled way of shooting with coloured gels is in the studio, as you will have complete control over the lighting and the background. Once you have mastered the basics of studio lighting, adding colour to your setup is the perfect way to transform something quite ordinary into a professional-looking capture.

Coloured gels can be used to simply light and colour a plain background, or to light your model for artistic effects. Using gels to colour your background is a popular choice for portrait photographers as it is generally a lower-cost option to buying multiple coloured backgrounds – all you need is a simple white backdrop and an array of relatively cheap gels. Using a gelled background can become trickier when it comes to full-body shots though, if an even-coloured background is what you are after, and you have to be careful that the light on the model doesn't overpower and wash out the colour.

"For portraits I use a three-light setup," says Vink. "I shoot against a black background for maximum colour contrast with the gels. I like to use clips and Scotch tape to affix the gels over the front of my modifiers. The front panel of your chosen modifier should be completely covered to avoid any light spillage around the edges. You can also use a modelling light with this setup, without worrying about melting the gels or damaging your equipment.

"My key light is typically a beauty dish – although an octabox will work too for softer looks. I use a gridded beauty dish for harder focused light, which will help enhance specular highlights and add contrast. I typically place the dish on a boom, about three to five feet in front of the model, angled downwards. You can also remove the gel on your key light to completely change the look of your image, adding coloured accents with rim lights as an alternative.

"For rim/side lights, I tend to opt for medium-sized softboxes, as it's easier to cover them with a roll of gel. Flagging off your rim lights with black V-Flats helps to control any light spillage and makes sure that the colours are exactly where you want them to be. I usually start by placing the lights about 40 degrees behind my subject, and adjust the position to broaden or narrow the rim light as required. The closer you bring your rim light to the side of the subject, the broader the beam of light will be on their face. I rotate the lights around in an arc, always keeping them at least five feet away from the model, depending on space constraints."

© Gabriel Nita

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Opposite
Mix colours
"Don't be afraid to play with different colours, but keep the colour wheel in mind," says Nita

Above
Two lights
A gelled light has been placed at either side of the model, creating a rim-light effect

Right
Hair light
In this shot the gelled light has been placed behind the model to create a glow around her hair

Below
Multiple colours
Here the background has been lit with a blue gel and the model has been lit with a pink and yellow gel



3x © Felix Barjou



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USE GELS ON LOCATION

Add atmosphere and mood to your portraits

Gels don't have to be limited to studio shoots; you can create all sorts of different effects on location too. Whether you are outside or inside on location, using coloured gels can help to transform a boring environment into something far more interesting. It is a way of introducing colour into a scene, but can also create ambience and drama. Colour can have a huge impact on the mood and message that your image conveys, so colour can be a great storytelling device to add something extra to your capture.

Obviously, just mindlessly throwing colour into a scene isn't the best idea, so when it comes to using gels on location you should think of a concept or story and make sure each colour that you choose is meaningful and adds something to the scene. When used subtly, coloured gels on location can help you to create stunning cinematic captures that will really stand out. Although we have already looked at the more overt and obvious way of adding colour into your imagery, sometimes when you are on location a more subtle approach is a far better way of producing high-end, professional-looking captures.

Make sure that you take some time over your colour selections. A green gel might go some way in helping you to create a certain mood, but if it makes your model look ill then it probably isn't ideal! Try to think of how to use gels that will complement the mood you are trying to create without compromising the look of the model. In a multiple-light setup it is also important to keep an eye on the power of each light – your aim should be to draw the viewer around the scene and inevitably to your model, and not be distracted by an array of bright lights.

When you are outside you can use an orange gel to mimic the sun or you can combine it with a cool colour temperature for a striking futuristic effect. Professional photographer Felix Barjou (**felixbarjou.com**) says, "Outside you can mix natural light and gelled strobes together, which is a different alternative to the studio." The possibilities really are endless, and Barjou advises that being creative is key.

Above
Mimic the sun
Here a 5,000K CTO gel has been used to mimic the setting sun, giving the model a beautiful orange glow



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COMBINE GELS WITH A CUSTOM WHITE BALANCE

Use a cool colour temperature with a CTO gel for a simple effect



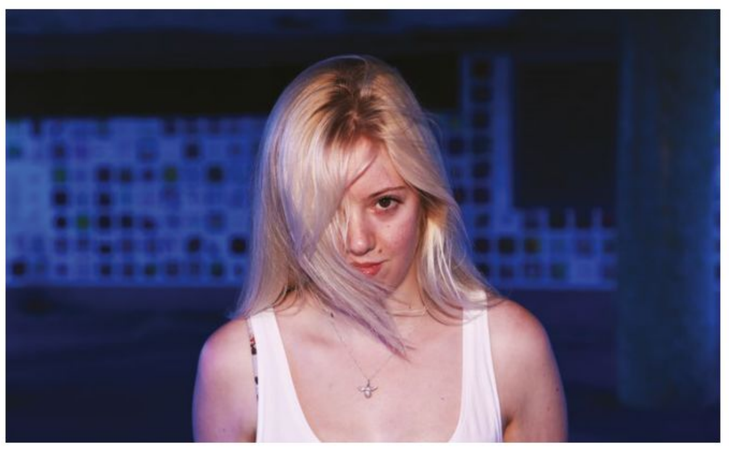
1 Attach the gel Attach the CTO gel to the speedlight – you can either use a special filter holder or, if your gel is from a sheet, you can just use tape.



2 Set the white balance Now you need to set the colour temperature of your camera. For a completely blue tone to the ambient light, the temperature was set to 2,500K.



3 Take the shot The use of the CTO gel counteracts the cool colour temperature, creating a split-tone effect. The image was underexposed to ensure that the blue tone was relatively deep and saturated.



A simple effect
Use one gel and a speedlight to create a striking portrait on location



2x © Felix Barjou

Below
Add to the mood
Here a 2,500K CTO gel has been used with a camera that has a cool colour temperature setting, which has caused the natural light outside to appear blue against the orange glow of the gel



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ENHANCE YOUR GEL CAPTURES

Portraits with colour effects are ideal for some editing tweaks and subtle boosts

Although you should strive to get your colours and lighting exactly how you want them to be in-camera, some post-processing will be essential in order to make the colours really pop. Sometimes in order to get the colour correct in-camera you may have to make compromises with your exposure. If you have had to underexpose the shot, your model may look a little on the dark side, so you might have to bring out the shadows and brightness of your model's face.

If the colour in your final capture isn't quite how you imagined it would be, you can alter them with a Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer in Photoshop, or use Selective Color to change and harmonise them to how you want. The great thing about using a Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer is that you can select specific colours to adjust. So if you have used a green light, you can increase the saturation of the green to make it pop without affecting the skin tone of your model.

You may want to do a colour correction and increase the contrast in your image. Either a Levels adjustment or a Curves adjustment is recommended, though there are more advantages to using Curves – it's more powerful, versatile and easier to control. You'll be able to adjust the highlights, shadows and midtones with ease and you can either adjust the entire image or just specific channels.

Dodging and burning is also another way to enhance your gelled captures. The Burn Tool can be used to burn the midtones and shadows of the eyelashes and eyebrows, the curve of the nose and the inner edges of the lips. The Dodge Tool can be used to brighten up the midtones of the eyes and the inside of the lips. These tools are particularly handy if you only want to alter certain parts of the image, like the model's face and body.

When it comes to colour toning an image you need to have a good understanding of complementary colours, as they can make a huge difference to the final capture. A cinematic colour-grading technique can also be employed to create striking cinematic effects in your on-location shots.

Above
Bold and bright
If you are after something a little more striking, allowing the gels to encroach on the model's skin can sometimes work well

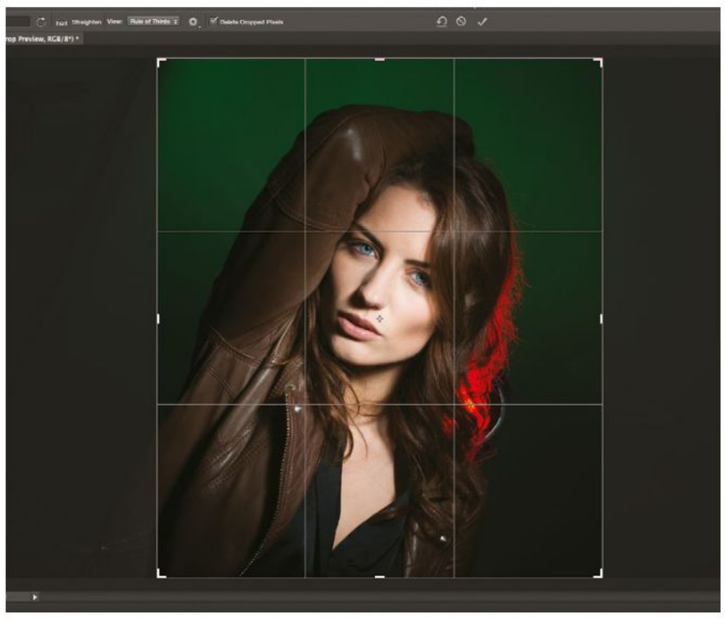
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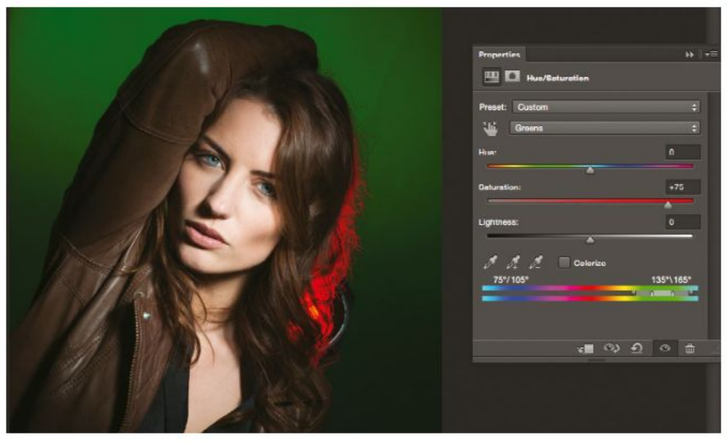
© Felix Barjou

ENHANCE COLOUR

Use a Hue/Saturation Adjustment layer to enhance the tone in your captures



1 Crop the image There is a lot of empty space in this shot that isn't really adding much to the final image. So to begin with, we selected the Crop Tool and got rid of the unwanted elements.



2 Enhance the colour Go to Layer> Adjustment Layer>Hue/Saturation. Now in the drop-down menu select Green and adjust the Saturation to +75. Next, select Red and adjust the Saturation to +40 and Blue Saturation to +67. This has enabled us to enhance the colours in the image and add some life to the model's skin and eyes without making the image look false.



3 Use the Clone Stamp Tool You can see the red gelled light behind the model, but we can remove this with the Clone Stamp Tool. Add a new layer, then with the Clone Stamp Tool selected, ensure that Opacity is set to 100%, alter the brush to your desired width and select All Layers from the dropdown. Hold Alt to select the area to clone, then release Alt and brush over the area you want to cover.

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SHOOT A FASHION PORTRAIT

Create beautiful images with these studio lighting and editing techniques

Lighting is one of the most important (if not the most important) elements when producing a fashion portrait. Lighting can make or break a photograph, so in order to produce a beautiful image you must first be able to understand how to create beautiful lighting. Working with natural light and studio lighting can result in very different effects. Natural lighting is usually soft and even, whereas studio lighting can be harsher and more controlled. Sometimes when shooting outdoors, images can lack contrast and shadow, and often when shooting in the studio images can look too artificial. When in the studio, the goal is to create light that has the perfect balance between softness and boldness. In this tutorial we will show you how to set up, light and edit a fashion portrait that combines the best qualities of both a studio and natural light image. Learn how to work with a studio lighting setup using two strobes, and master capturing and editing your image from start to finish.

Right

Two-light studio portrait

This image was captured using a two-light setup in the studio, and retouched using simple editing techniques in Photoshop

All images © Marissa Alden Photography

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- DSLR
- Prime lens or standard portrait lens
- Photoshop
- 2x strobe lights
- Large octabox
- Beauty dish with diffuser
- 2x boom arms
- Tethering equipment (optional)



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SHOOTING STEPS

1 Set up the first strobe To start, attach an octabox to a strobe light and mount to a boom arm stand. Position to the left of the model, and position the octabox in front of them (as pictured). Heighten the stand so the modifier is taller than your subject and angle the boom arm at a 45-degree angle.

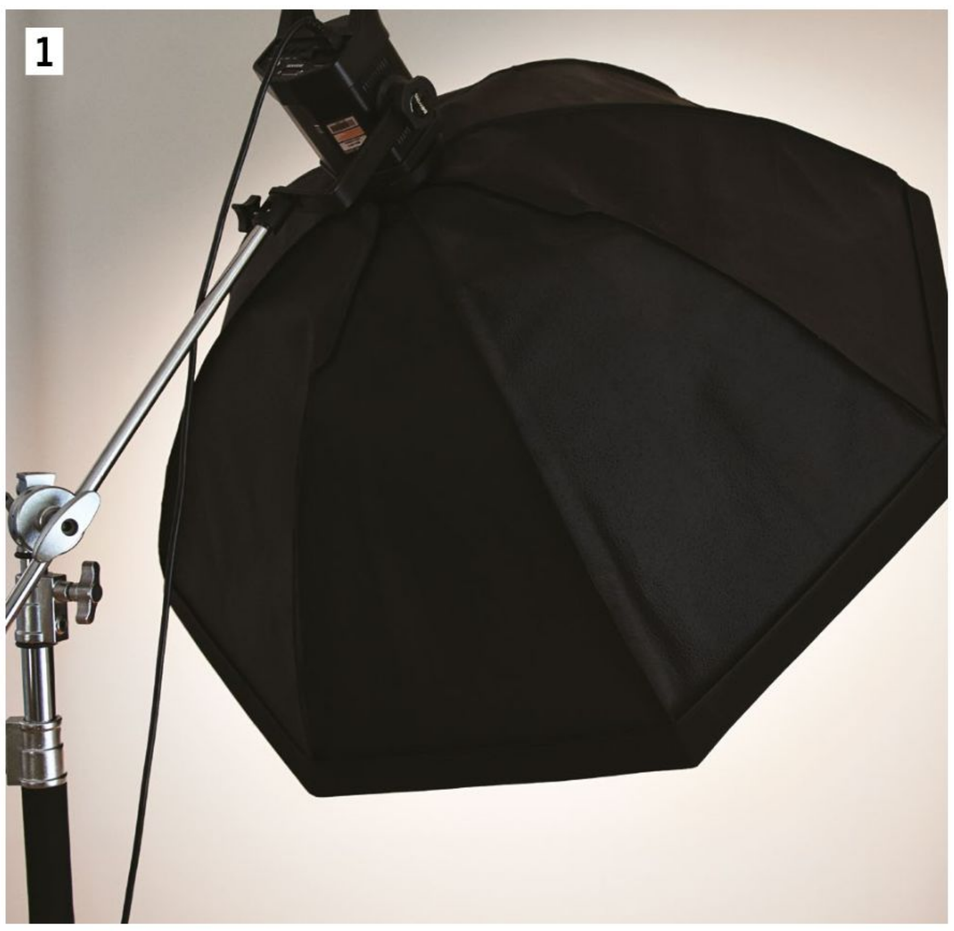
2 Set up both lights Start by mounting the second strobe to a boom arm. Attach the beauty dish to the second light and place it on the right side of the studio, mirroring the position of the first light. Both modifiers should meet at the middle and slightly overlap. The beauty dish will act as a fill light.

3 Take tester shots Begin by taking some tester shots. Start with your strobes on a low setting and your camera on a low ISO, and increase if the image is appearing too dark. These images were taken with an ISO of 125, shutter speed of 1/125 and an aperture of f7.1. Adjust your settings until you are satisfied with the results.

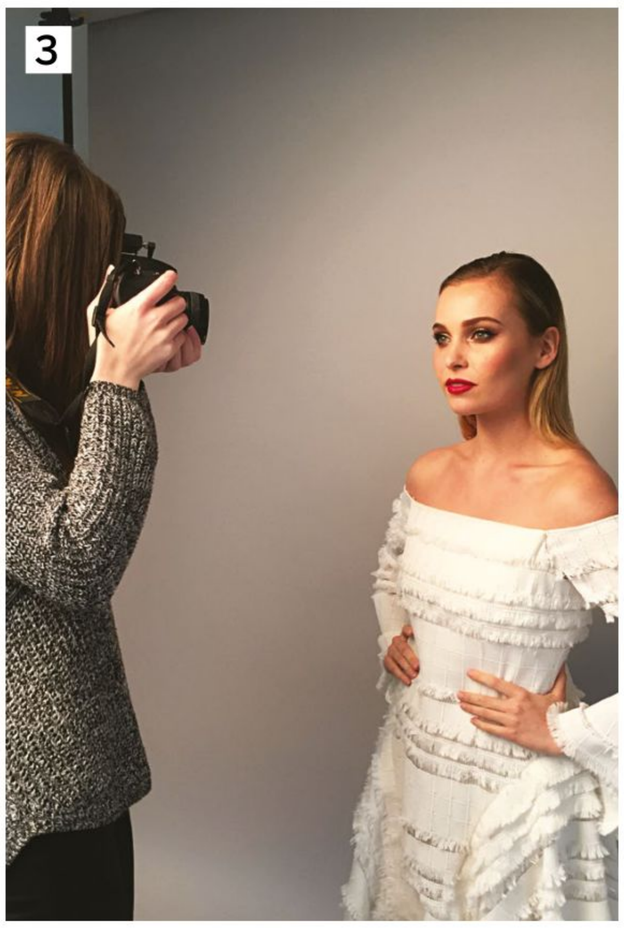
4 Start shooting Once you're happy with the outcome of your tester shots, start shooting. Begin by taking basic headshots without too much movement. This will allow the model to get comfortable in front of the camera and will give you some time to further adjust your settings if needed.

5 Experiment This is when you can start getting creative and experimenting. Direct the model and explore how you want her/him to pose. Experiment with using styling and props. Play around with black and white effects and adjusting contrast on Capture One, if you are shooting tethered.

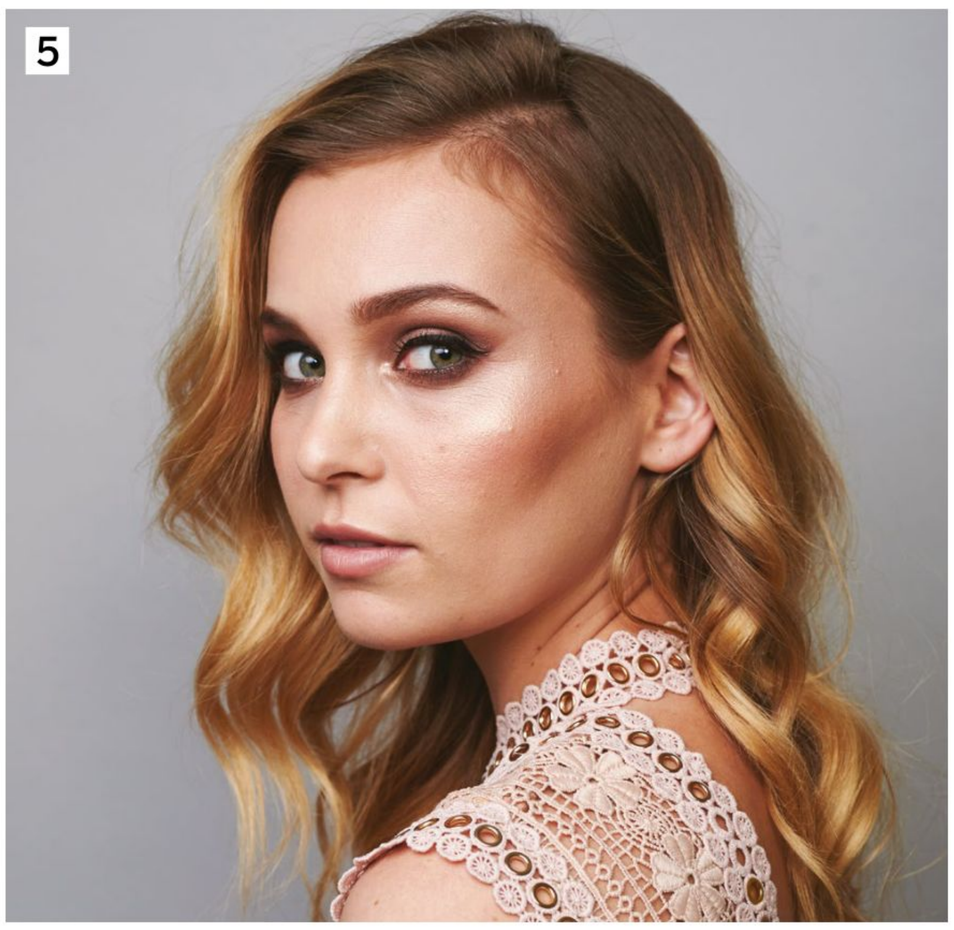
6 Reposition the lights If you want to shoot your model sitting down, you can easily adjust this setup to suit any height. Simply lower both boom stands, keeping the ratio of space between the model and the lights the same as when she/he was standing.













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THE SETUP



OCTABOX
An octabox is great for soft lighting. Choose an octabox or softbox that is larger than 90cm and has a diffuser attached

STROBE LIGHTS
The best strobe lights for fashion portraits are 300W or higher. Choose a strobe that allows you to easily adjust the power of the flash and has a quick recharge time

BEAUTY DISH
Perfect for beauty shots, a white beauty dish adds contrast but produces softer light than a silver beauty dish. Add a diffuser for an even softer effect

BOOM STANDS
Boom stands are perfect for having control of the angle of your lights. Choose a heavy-duty boom stand for heavier equipment and use sandbags to prevent the stand from falling over

LENS
Choose a good portrait lens. Prime lenses such as 50mm or 85mm are ideal for fashion portraits

LAPTOP
Shooting tethered is ideal for shooting in the studio. Use a program such as Capture One to view the images on your computer live as you shoot them

CAMERA
Use a camera that allows you to adjust settings such as ISO, shutter speed and aperture. Any modern DSLR camera will enable you to do this

STUDIO OPTIONS

Get similar lighting results with other equipment

Beautiful studio lighting isn't limited to one setup. If you don't have access to two strobe lights as used in this tutorial, a beautiful lighting setup can be created with one strobe and an octabox or softbox. By positioning the light at a more central angle to the model, you can mimic the two-light setup and produce soft lighting across his/her face with only one light. Further soften the light by adding in a reflector or some white v-flats to lighten the shadows. You can also combine natural and strobe lighting to enhance the natural light effect even more. Try modifying this technique using whatever equipment you have at home.



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EDIT THE SHOT

1 Remove blemishes In Photoshop, duplicate the layer and use the Healing Brush Tool to remove any unwanted blemishes.

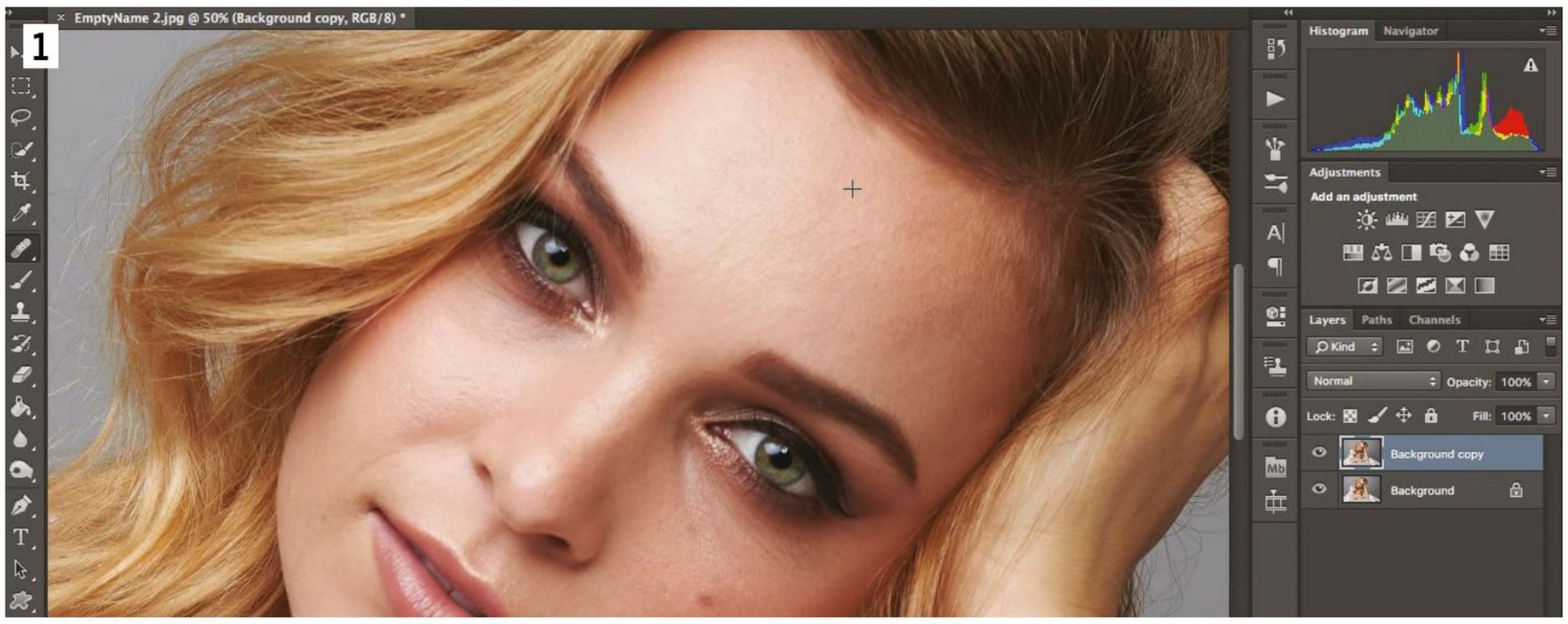
2 Adjust exposure Add a Levels adjustment layer and move the sliders to enhance the lighting. Slightly darken the shadows, highlights and midtones.

3 Add contrast To further enhance the lighting, add a Brightness/ Contrast adjustment layer and increase Contrast by 9-10.

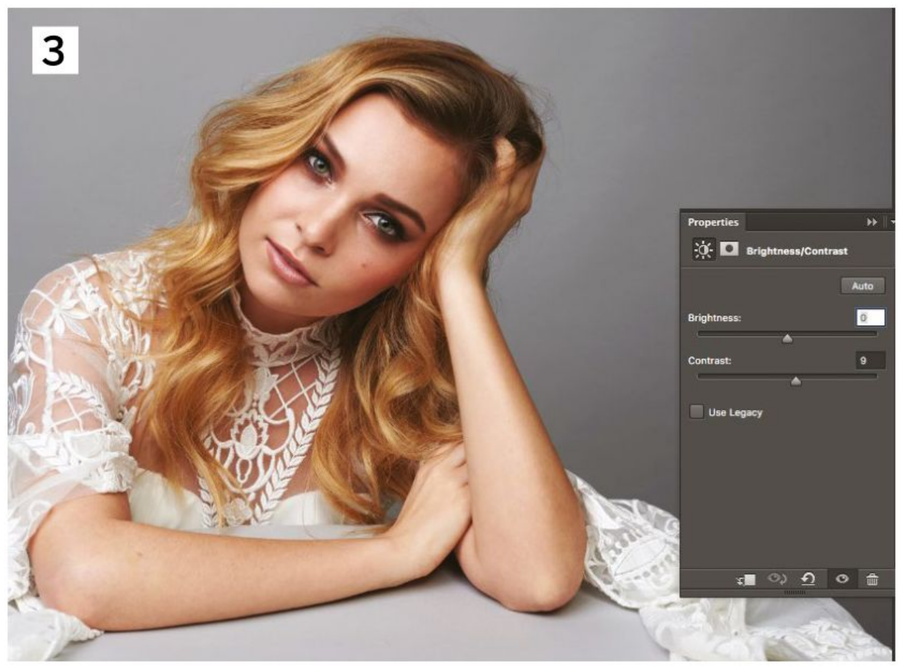
4 Dodge Even out the skin by lightening and darkening patchy areas. Create a Curves layer and pull the curves adjustment upwards to brighten highlights. Inverse this layer and use a white brush with 0% hardness and 3% opacity to brighten sections of the skin.

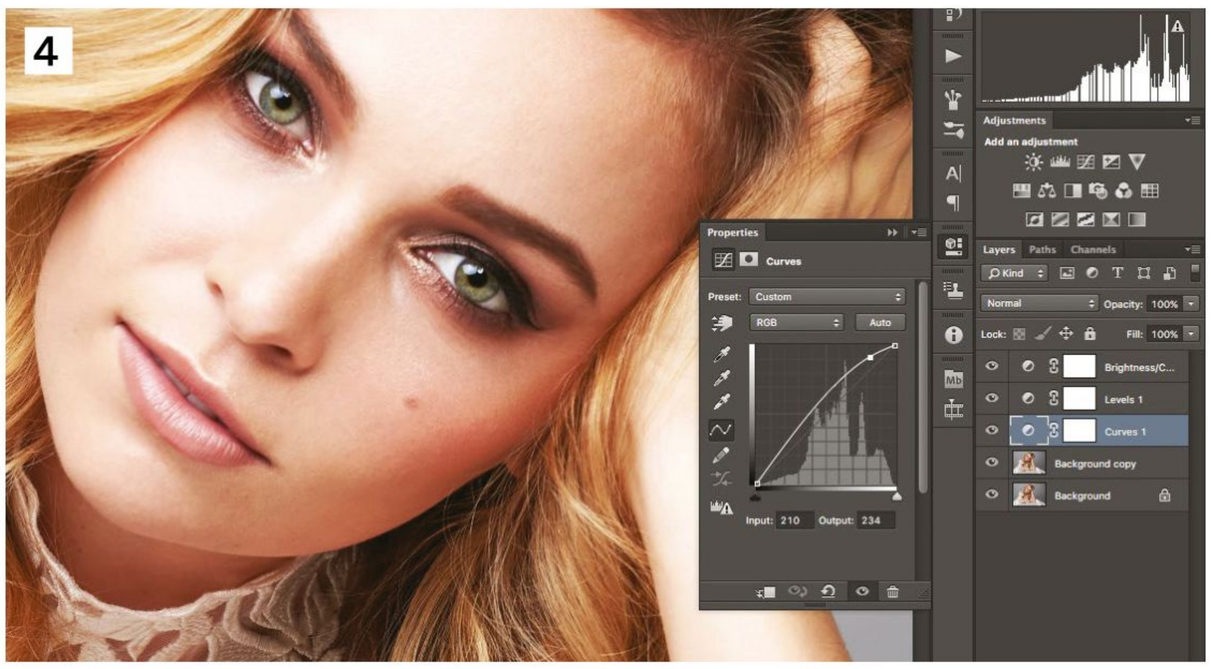
5 Burn Create another Curves layer, this time pulling the curve downwards to darken shadows. Inverse the layer and using the same brush settings darken and even out sections of the skin.

6 Adjust colour tone Enhance colour by creating a Color Balance layer and adjusting the Midtones and Highlights colour levels. Inverse the layer and use a brush with 20% opacity to brush over the desired areas.

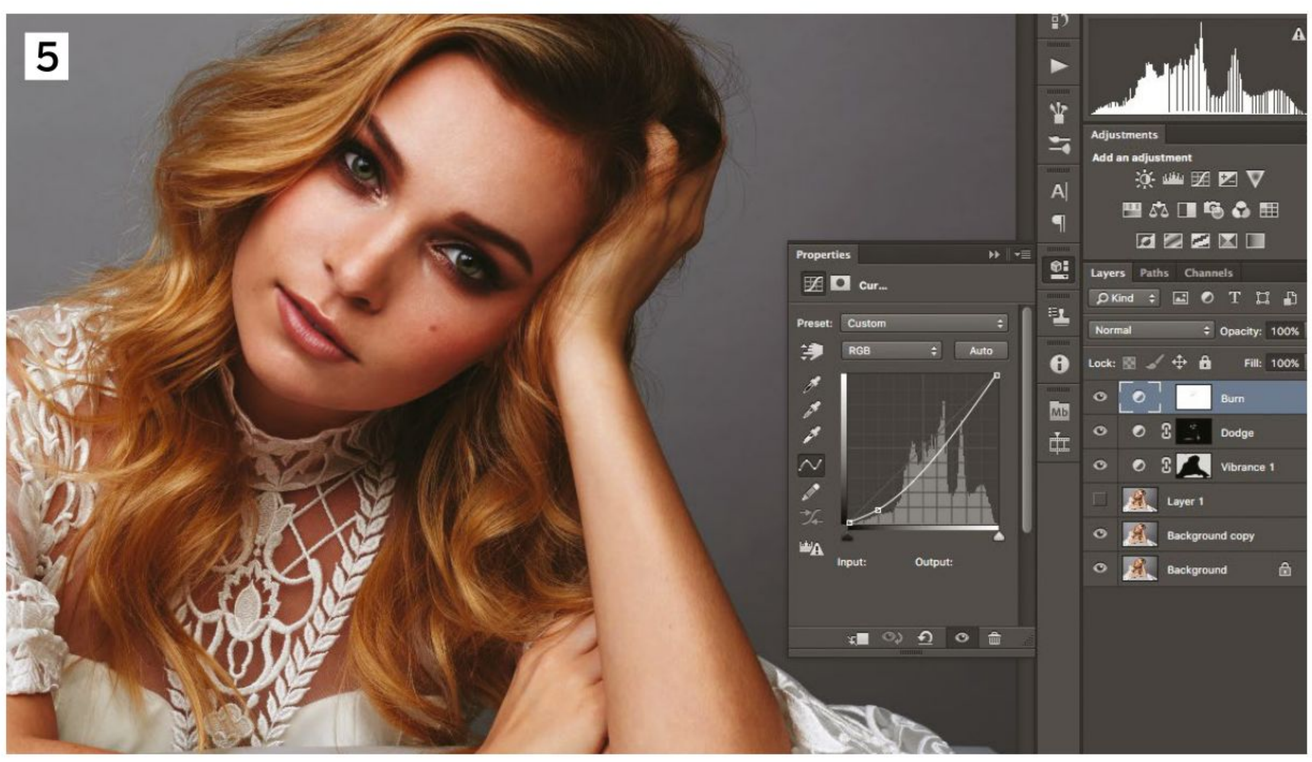


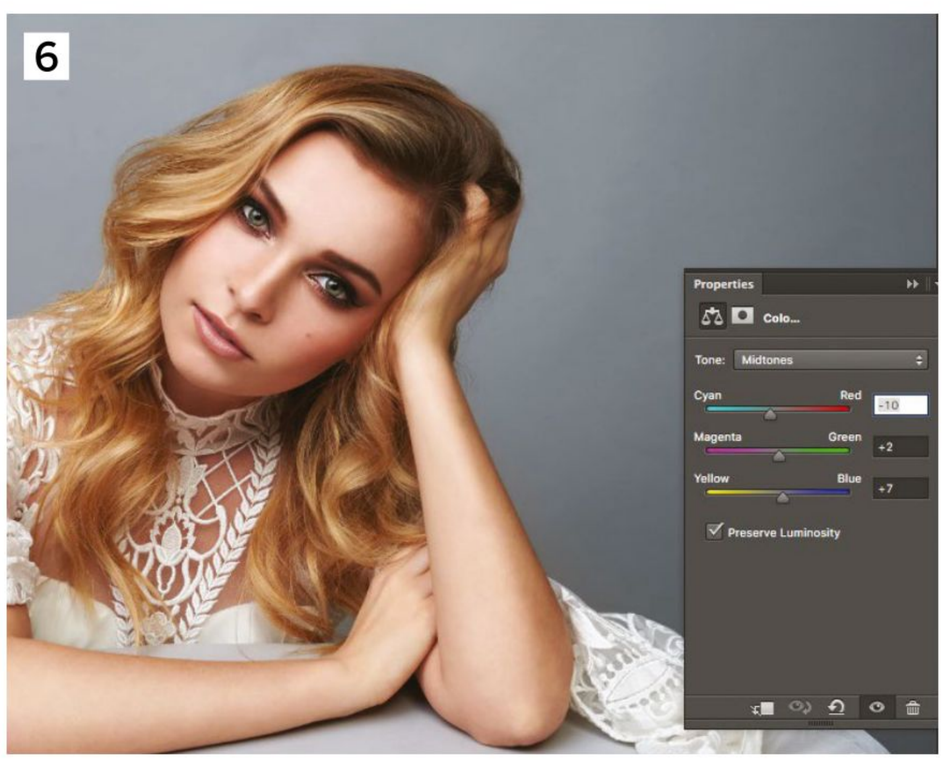






Below
Retouching a fashion portrait
These are simple techniques to enhance a fashion portrait. Smooth skin and enhance your image while maintaining texture and quality





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SHOOT A FASHION PORTRAIT





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LIGHT A PORTRAIT ON LOCATION

Pro shooter Tom Barnes reveals how to create an atmospheric character study using flash

Shooting on location is tough and always throws up different and unexpected challenges, so preparing yourself can help you to avoid these hiccups and work through them effectively if they do rear their head. Here you will discover how to shoot a location-based environmental portrait setup, how to deal with any obstacles that may arise and how to successfully capture the shot. Over the course of my career I have worked in some truly terrible locations and have experienced everything location shooting has to offer... My style of shooting has evolved to be very minimal; over the years I have found that the less kit you have to drag around, the larger the variety of imagery you should be able to get from a shoot – and it also means less to go wrong!

There's also a retouch guide to run you through the tools to use in post- production to work up and retouch the final images in Photoshop, from opening the image right through to the final stages of prep and export.

Right

Sam and his nineT

This is Sam with his pride and joy, his BMW R 1200 nineT... we took the opportunity to shoot a few portraits of him with it before he swaps it for an Indian motorcycle

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Camera and lens
- Flash and modifier
- Lighting stand
- Sandbags
- Willing model
- Little to no wind



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SHOOTING STEPS

1 Scout and plan While rocking up and shooting is often fine, you will find that planning will help you get better shots. You can use a multitude of apps to help you plan location access (Google Maps) and the direction of the Sun at a certain time of day (Sun Seeker).

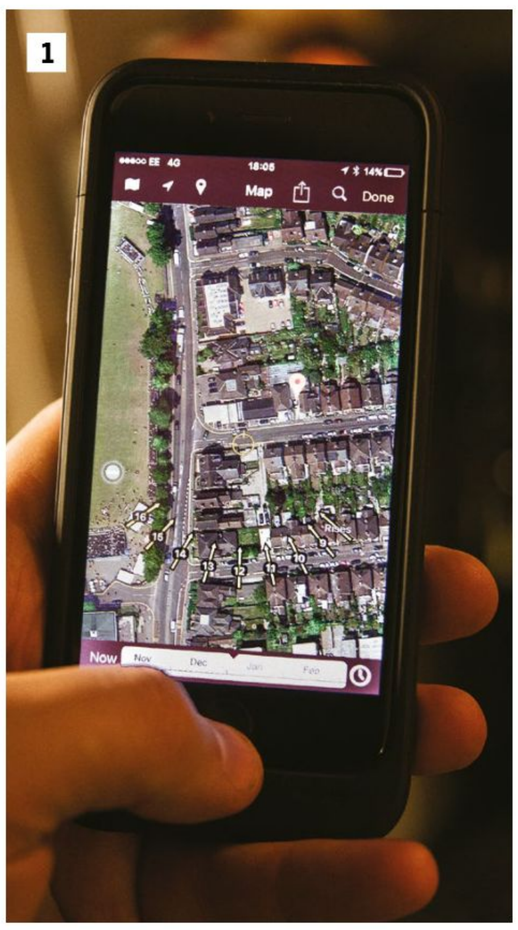
2 Set up You have to make sure you do not create an obstruction or make the environment dangerous for pedestrians. Take the minimal kit needed rather than everything you might need – this helps keep your footprint down when working outside, plus it keeps gear safe if it suddenly rains.

3 Choose the right lens Too wide and your subject will look far away and distorted, too long and you might find the shot is much more intimate than you thought it would be and you lose all the elements of a location shoot. A recommended lens for this sort of shot is the EF 24-70mm 2.8L II – no distortion and a useful range.

4 Expose the background When you have your frame in mind it is time to start exposing for it. One way to do this is to shoot without flash to gauge the exposure on the rear LCD screen of the camera. Shoot in Manual mode and adjust the shutter speed once you have set the aperture and ISO.

5 Balance the flash Once your background is how you want it to look exposure wise, you need to add the flash. This is very subjective and it's up to you how light/dark you want your subject to be; you might find that you want to lighten or darken your background and if this is the case, repeat the previous step.

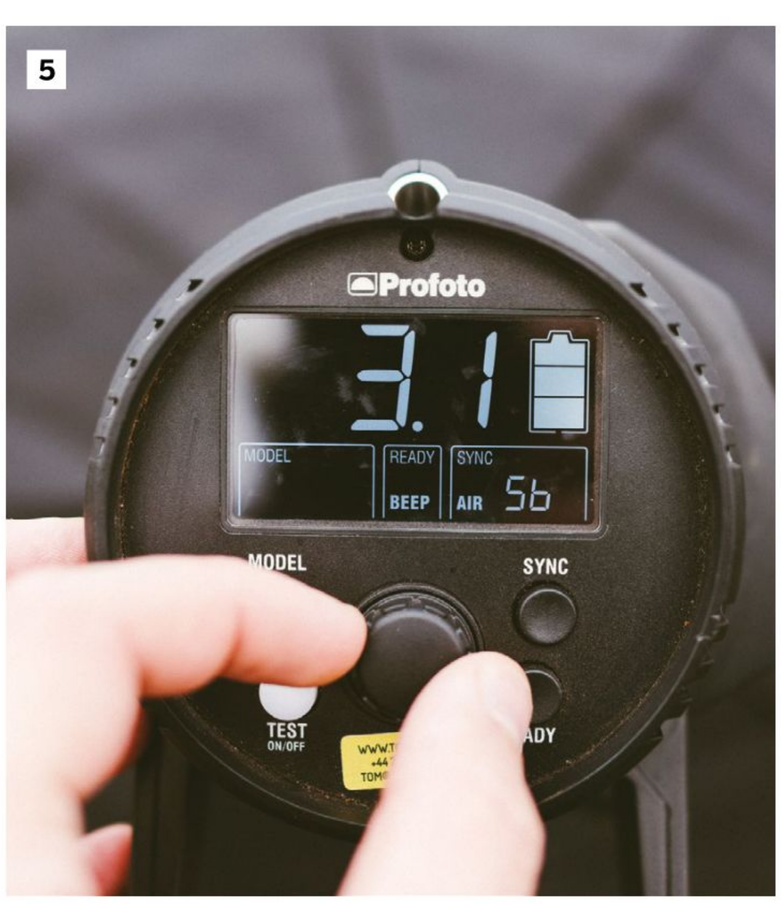
6 Different looks With the exposures all set you can move the light head slightly and change the angle. This will affect the way the light hits the subject, so you can add more shadows to create drama. The more you use your modifiers the more you'll be able to tell which is right for each job – spend time practising with them.













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THE SETUP

MODIFIER
Choose your favourite modifier, here we used this 3ft Octa from Profoto. Find something you are comfortable with and also something you know and understand. Practise with the modifiers and see how you can get different light by adjusting angle and proximity to subject.

LIGHT STANDS
Strong lighting stands are a must if you are working outside. Again with wind a weak stand could topple or snap. Stands can even just collapse under weight as it is often misjudged. Getting a bigger stand will also help your flash be steadier at greater heights as the tubes tend to be stronger on the thicker/heavier stands.

SANDBAGS
If you are shooting outside and using lights without sandbags, the slightest sniff of wind could send your investment crashing down to the ground, which is something you absolutely do not want to happen! They are relatively inexpensive and can save you thousands of pounds in repair costs or insurance claims!

USE A LOUPE OUTSIDE

Stop the Sun from obscuring your view

A loupe blocks out any sunlight from hitting your LCD screen on the camera, so that you can see a much more accurate image displayed on the back. This makes it much easier to gauge exposure and lighting when shooting outdoor portraits. The Zacuto Z-Finder is the crème de la crème of screen loupes, but you can get much cheaper versions that do the same thing.

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EDITING STEPS

1 WB and Camera Raw Setting the white balance will affect the overall tone of the photograph. It's at this point that you decide the base colour tone for the image and have the ability to correct for any colour casts and the like. Here we shot manual WB so we did not have to rely on the camera to get an accurate measure each shot. We also processed a little highlight and shadow detail recovery here to help with the edit.

2 Transform and correct Level out the image if required using the Straighten Tool, Here we also used the Patch tool to clean up any unwanted distractions that might divert the viewer's eye; select from one area and drag to another to move texture and remove unwanted distractions.

3 Contrast There are multiple ways of adding contrast to an image but our chosen technique is to use an 'S-curve' with the Curves tool in Photoshop. This gives you control over the RGB as well as channels separately – you can also use Curves to affect colour.

4 Colour toning For this you should mainly use the Color Balance tool, as you can affect the shadows/mids and highlights all separately, which makes it a very powerful and selective tool.

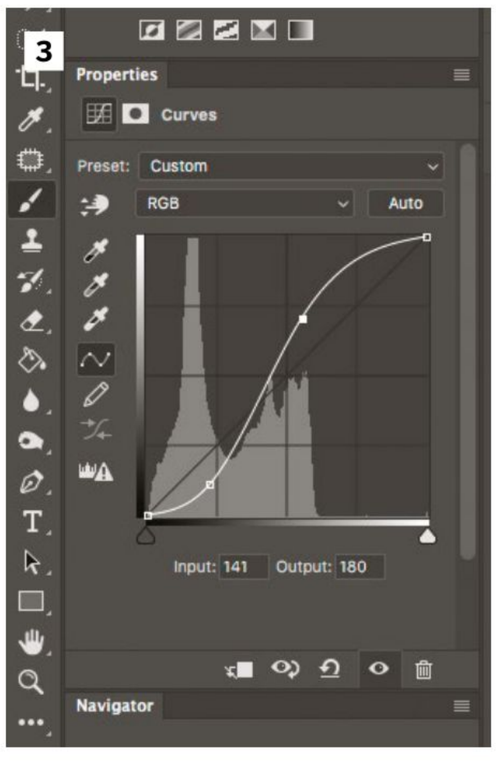
5 Look sharp Before sending files out, finish them off by sharpening them up. What level of sharpening depends entirely on their intended destination, whether it is for print or web use and so on. Use Unsharp Mask or Smart Sharpen depending on the subject type.

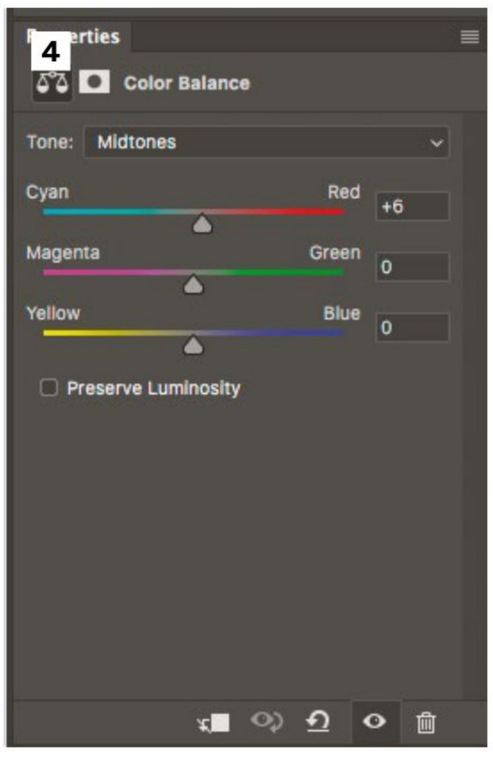
6 Export and back up You absolutely must back up your work. One copy of your data is not enough; you should always use the 3-2-1 backup strategy for your data (three copies of the data: two in the office and one off-site).

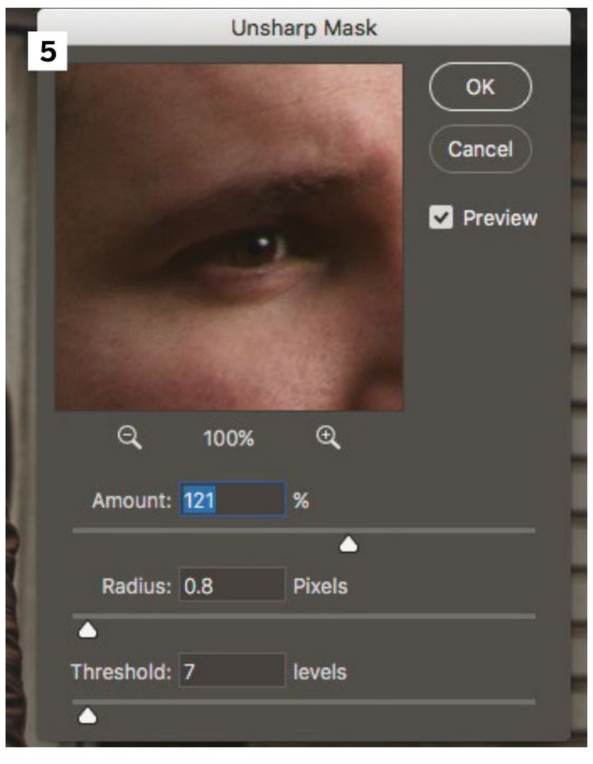




Right
Professional finish
Some relatively simple tweaks in post production can add extra polish to the final result



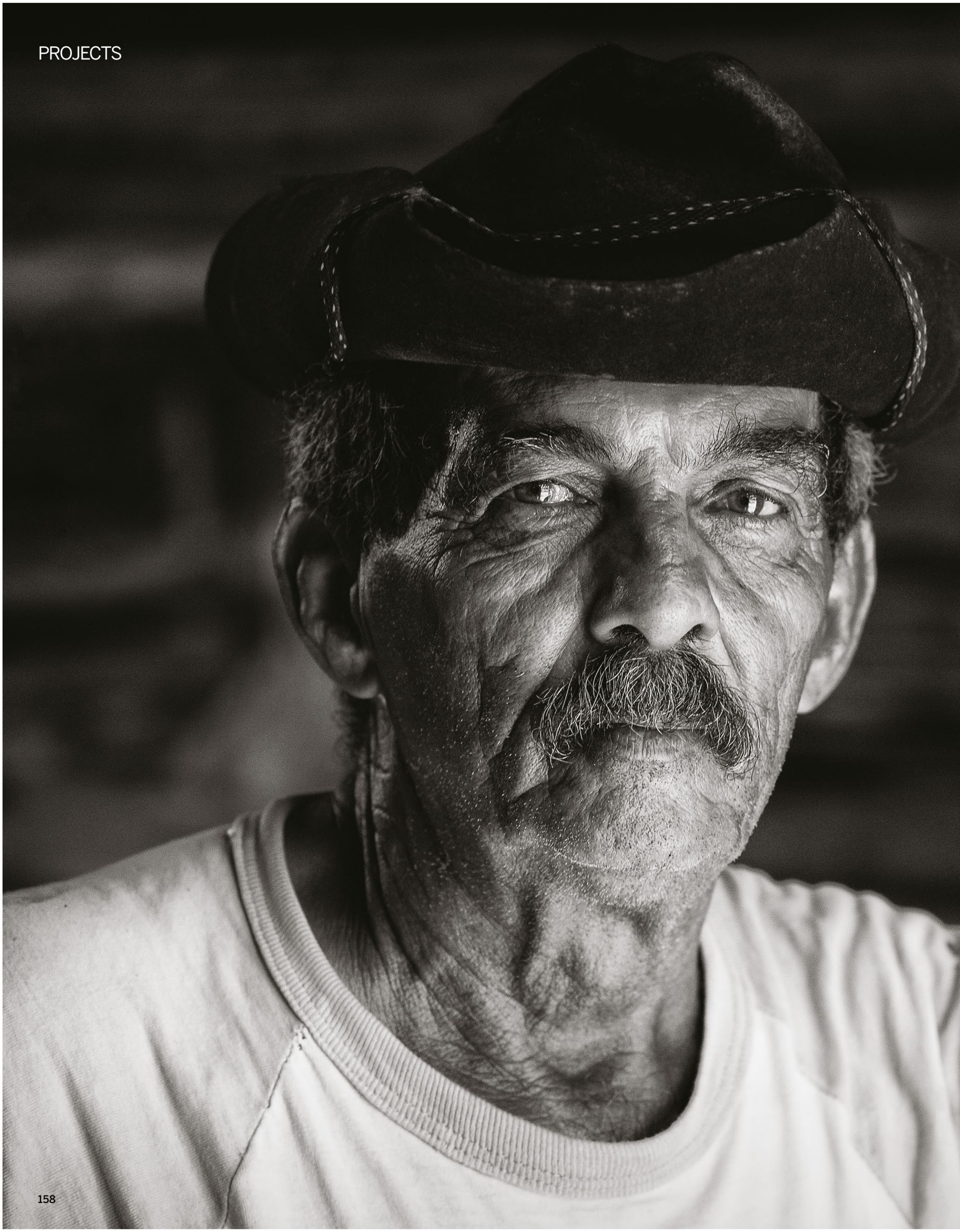





BEFORE


AFTER

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SHOOT A CHARACTER PORTRAIT

Use natural settings and daylight to create simple but powerful studies

Portrait photography is one of the most accessible and photographic subjects – after all, we encounter people almost every day of our lives, at home, at work, walking down the street or during our travels. The most powerful and compelling portraits also tend to be the simplest, so there's no need for exotic equipment, fancy lighting or in-depth technical knowledge. In this tutorial you will learn how to shoot successful black and white character portraits in a natural setting, using daylight as the main source of illumination. The subject here is a Cuban tobacco farmer.

To produce a great character portrait you need a subject with character. Old people are ideal as they have a lifetime etched into every line and wrinkle on their face. People who work outdoors also tend to have more characterful faces because they spend so much time in the elements – farmers and fishermen are good examples.

The key to success with portrait photography is taking control over the situation rather then letting it control you. Keep the background and lighting simple so you can concentrate on engaging with your sitter, to ensure that the final image does much more than capture a physical likeness – it reaches into their soul.

Left
Tobacco farmer, Vinales, Cuba
The final image is a very powerful and compelling portrait. Strong eye contact makes a big difference as it allows you to engage with the subject, while bold lighting reveals character in his face

All images © Lee Frost

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Camera
- Lens
- Lens hood
- Tripod (optional)
- Plain background
- Natural daylight
- Characterful subject

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SHOOTING STEPS

1 Select camera settings Auto white balance, single-shot AF and multi-zone metering were selected. We set aperture priority exposure mode, plus a wide lens aperture to reduce depth of field and make sure the background was thrown out of focus. As light levels were low, the ISO was increased to 1600.

2 Take control of the situation Explain to your subject what you want them to do – where to stand, where to look – then take the first shot to see how everything is looking. Check the exposure, lighting, background and pose and make any necessary adjustments.

3 Take your first portraits Once you're happy with how everything is looking, start shooting your portraits. The initial shot shown in Step 2 included too much, and the subject's arm disappearing out of the frame looked awkward, so for this shot the lens was zoomed tighter on the subject's face.

4 Focus on the eyes The first thing you look at in a portrait is the subject's eyes. They are the 'windows to the soul' and tell us a lot about the person. Therefore, make sure the subject's leading eye, or both eyes, are sharply focused. Lock focus using single-shot AF then quickly re-compose before taking the shot.

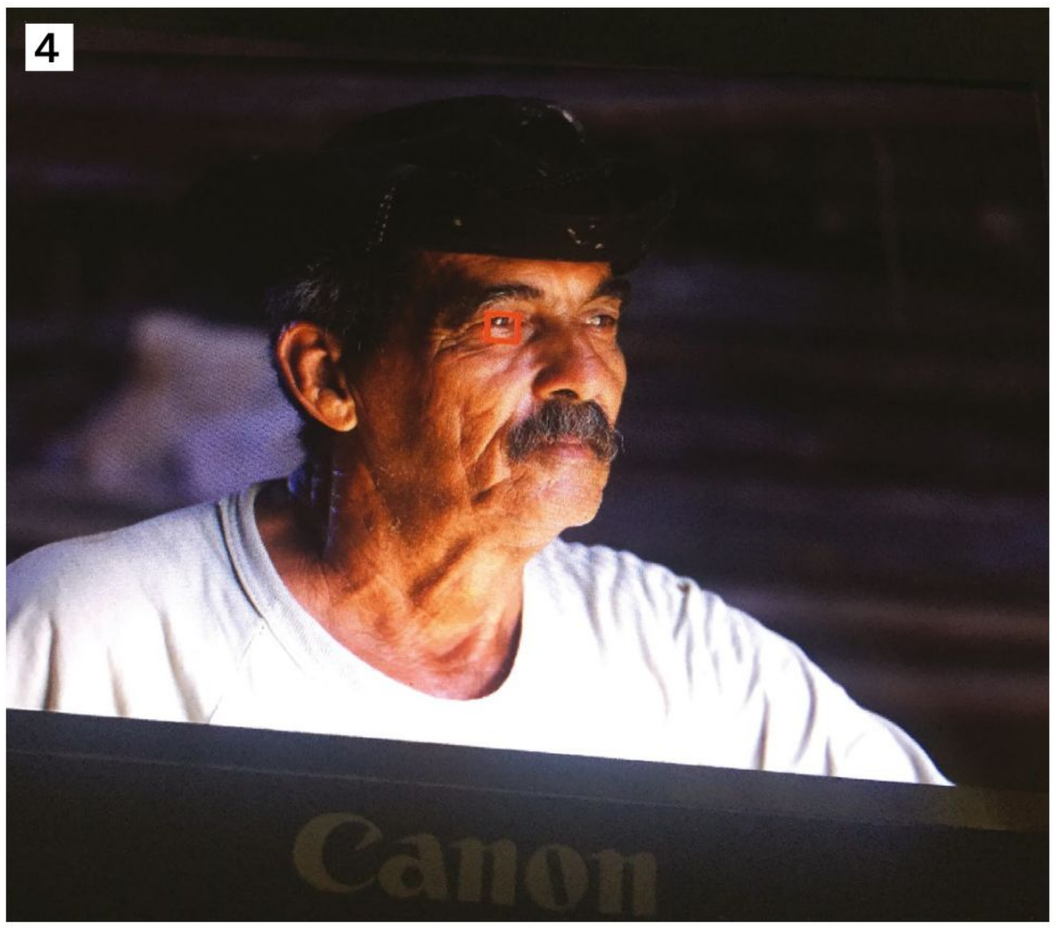
5 Keep your subject interested Your can't spend hours shooting portraits as most people start to lose interest and get restless. To avoid that, concentrate, try to work quickly, and communicate with your subject so they know what they're doing. You should be able to capture a great portrait in a few minutes.

6 Refine the portrait After taking a few shots you should be getting close to achieving your goal. In this case, the subject was initially photographed looking towards the open door. However, by asking him to look straight at the camera, a much more engaging portrait was achieved, with strong eye contact.

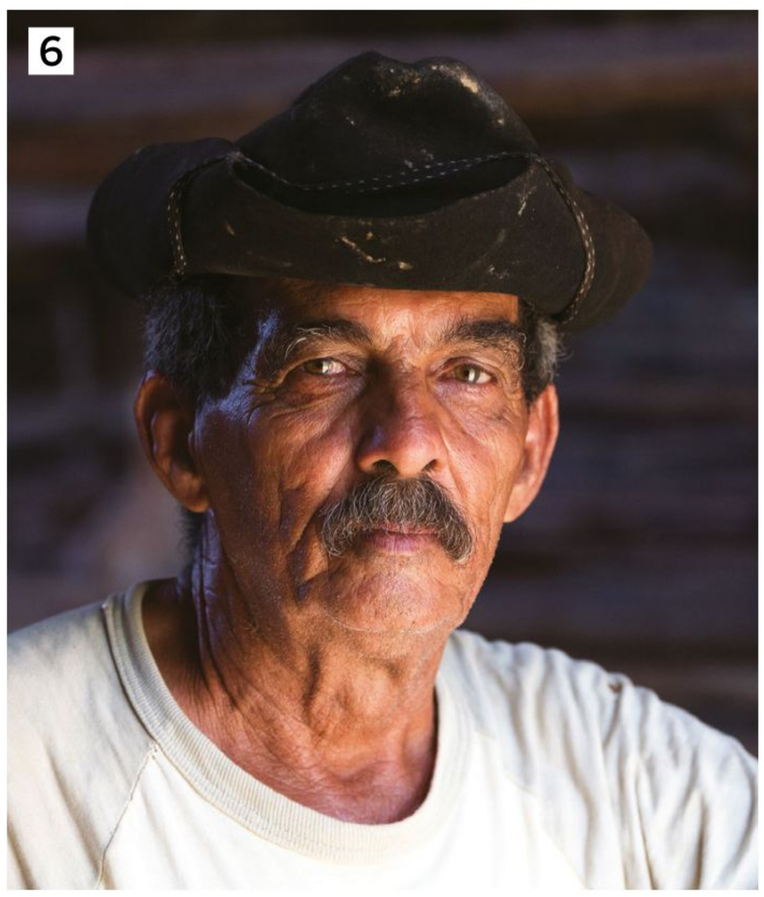












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THE SETUP

KEEP THE BACKGROUND SIMPLE
Although the background appears cluttered, because light levels inside the hut are much lower than at the entrance, it will be underexposed and rendered unobtrusive.

CHOICE OF SETTING
The subject was posed in his natural environment where he would feel comfortable being photographed. This helps to produce more relaxed portraits.

LIGHTING THE SUBJECT
The subject was posed inside a tobacco drying hut, but close to an open door so that indirect daylight flooded his face.

FLATTERING FACES Choosing the right lens can make a big difference to your portraits

The best lens for portraiture depends on the type of portrait you're actually shooting. For classic head-and-shoulders portraits like those here, a short telephoto focal length between 85-135mm is ideal as it will compress perspective a little, which in turn flatters facial features. You can also shoot from a comfortable distance, and depth of field at a wide aperture such as f4 is reduced enough to make sure that distracting backgrounds are thrown well out of focus.

A moderate wide-angle lens with a focal length in the 24-35mm range is very useful for environmental portraits that capture your subject in their surroundings. However, they should be avoided for conventional portraits as you'll need to move too close to your subject, which results in exaggeration of the facial features due to the way wide lenses stretch perspective.



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EDIT THE SHOT

1 Open the RAW file The RAW file is opened in Adobe Camera Raw and assessed for sharpness and exposure. As the final portrait will be in black and white, only Lens Corrections are applied before the image is opened in Adobe Photoshop CC.

2 Save the image There are some bright highlights in the background that are distracting. These are removed with a few mouse clicks using the Clone Stamp Tool in Photoshop, then the image is saved as a 16-bit TIFF file.

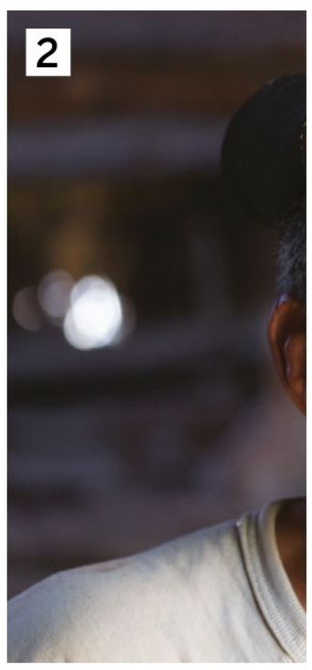
3 Convert to black and white The colour TIFF file is opened in Silver Efex Pro 2 via the Filters menu in Photoshop CC. The High Structure (smooth) preset is selected, which brings out more texture in the subject's weathered skin.

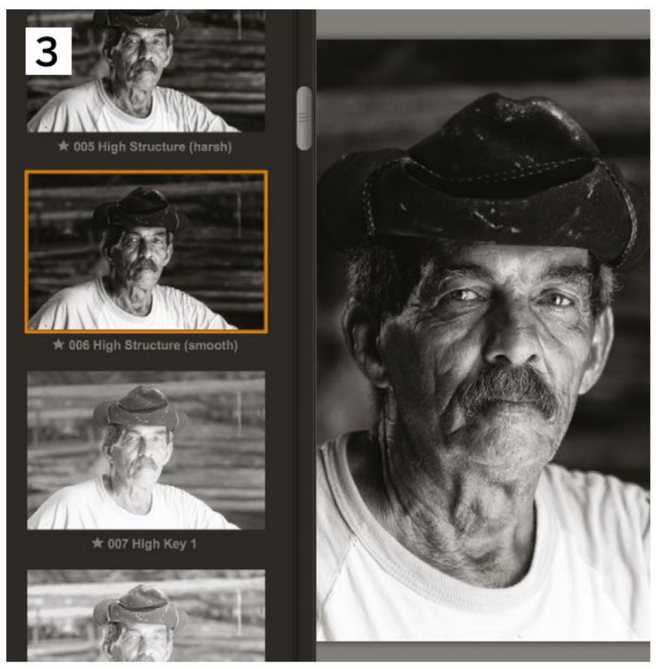
4 Enhance the image Next, select the Burn Edges – All Edges (soft) 2 preset. As the name suggests, this darkens the edges of the image so the subject's face stands out more prominently against the background.

5 Reveal character To make the portrait more characterful, the subject's face is selected using the Lasso Tool and a feathering of 200 pixels. Next, Clarity is increased using Filter>Camera Raw Filter and moving the Clarity slider to the right a little.

6 Make final tweaks The image is enlarged to 100% and examined. A few sensor blemishes and distracting marks, primarily on the subject's hat, are quickly removed using the Healing Brush Tool, then the layers are flattened and the image saved.





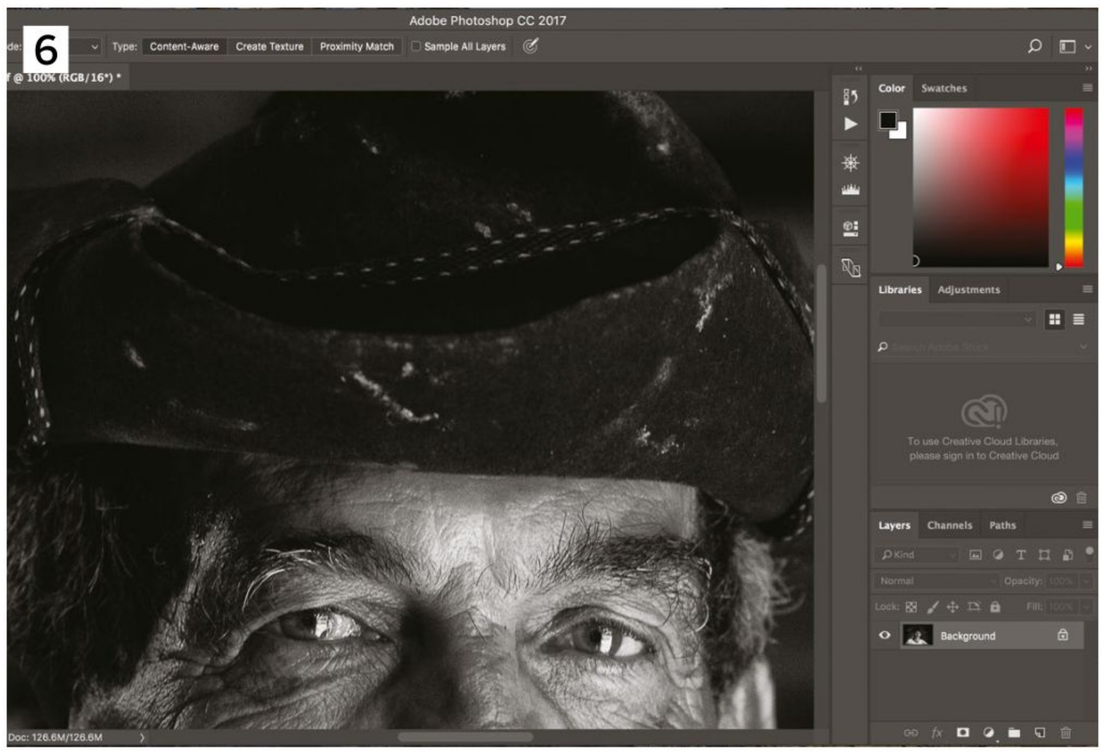




Below
Full of character
A more engaging portrait has been produced by bringing out the texture of the face and making it stand out against the background

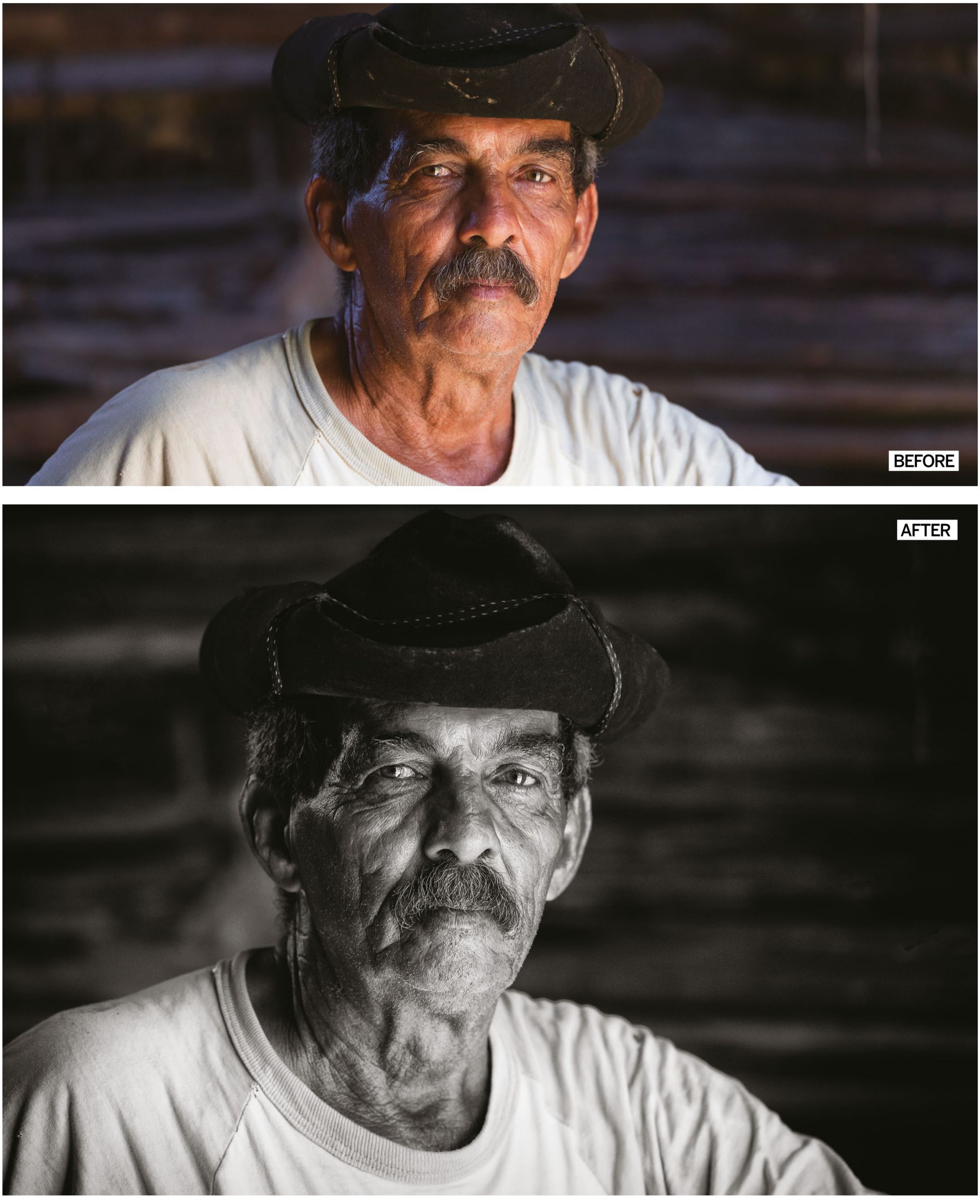
22.1 MP, ISO 1600, Canon





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SHOOT A CHARACTER PORTRAIT



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USE FLASH FOR MODERN PORTRAITS

Discover how to capture glitzy Hollywood-inspired portraits in your own living room

Have you ever watched a Hollywood movie and wished you could capture the glitz and glam of tinseltown in a portrait? Well, what if we told you that you could do just that, all from the comfort of your own home? All it requires is a clever bit of lighting, a willing model as well as the right clothing and props to make it appear convincing. If this sounds like a challenge, then think again as it's actually incredibly simple to pull off and with our easy-to-follow step-by-step guide we'll show you exactly how it's done from setup and shooting, to adding the finishing touches in Photoshop.

Before you get started you'll need to make sure you have the right gear, most importantly a camera and a lighting setup. If you don't own a set of studio strobes, then a pair of flashguns works just as well. You'll just need to make sure you have a way of firing them off-camera, so investing in a set of inexpensive radio triggers is a must. You'll also need lighting stands to allow you to easily position your lights. Once you have the necessary gear, take a read of our guide to get started.

Left
Stunning glitz
Capture the glamour of Hollywood at home, with a simple two flash setup and some quick editing steps in Photoshop

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Camera
- Two light stands
- Two flashguns
- Wireless radio triggers
- Light modifier (softbox, umbrella, beauty dish etc.)
- Photoshop

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SHOOTING STEPS

1 Set up your camera Start off by switching your camera over to Full Manual (M on the mode Dial) and dial in a shutter speed of 1/125sec. Set the Aperture to around f8 and the ISO sensitivity to the lowest possible setting. Set the White Balance setting to the Flash preset.

2 Activate your flashguns To mimic the lighting setup we've used, you'll need two individual light sources, but if you don't have two you can simply use one instead. Start by inserting a fresh set of batteries in to the flashguns, then set them to Manual mode. Dial the power output to 1/2 power.

3 Use wireless triggers Arguably the easiest way to fire your flashguns off-camera is by using a set of wireless triggers. Attach the receivers to your flashguns and the transmitter to the top of your camera. Turn on all the units and make sure that they're all set to the same frequency channel.

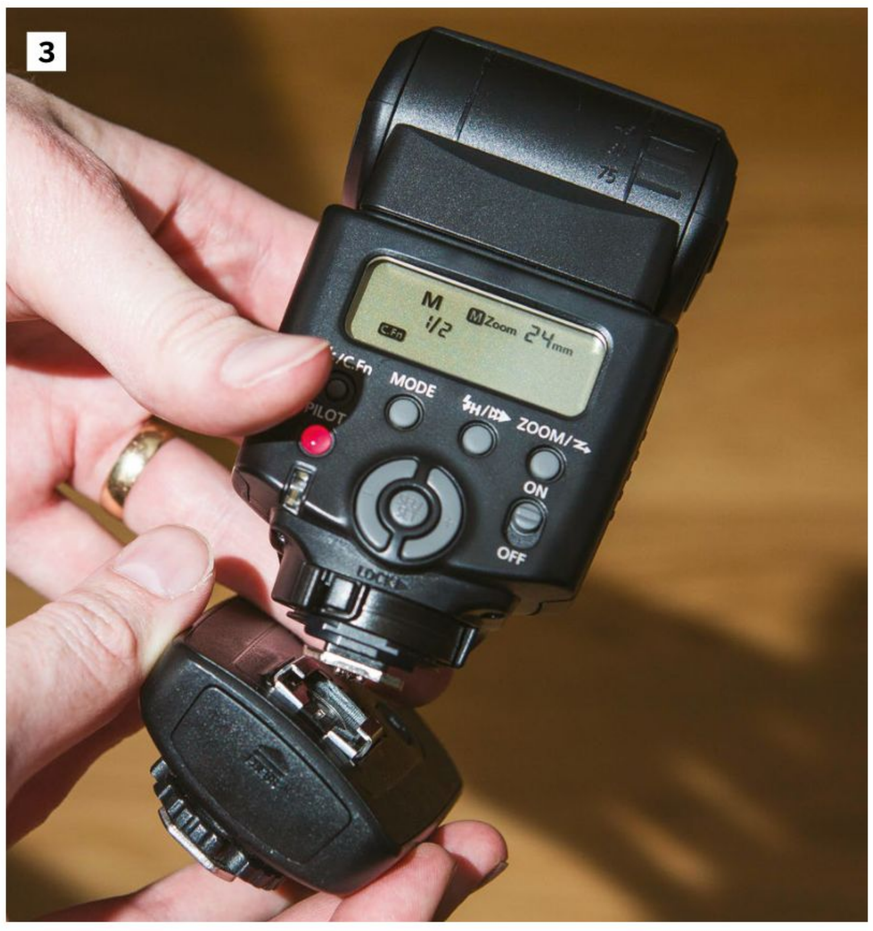
4 Position your light stands Erect two light stands and attach each flashgun to the top. Now, position one stand in front and slightly to the side of your model, making sure the light is pointing down on to their face. The second stand should be setup to the opposite side and just behind them.

5 Use a modifier If you have one available, attaching a light modifier to your main flashgun is a great way to soften the light hitting your model's face for a much more flattering result. We've opted for a beauty dish, though a small softbox or even a shoot-through umbrella would also work well.

6 Take the shot With your lights and model in position look through the viewfinder and take a shot. Review the image on the rear screen; if the shot is too bright, reduce both of the flashgun's power outputs to 1/4sec and try again. If it's not bright enough, increase them to full power.













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THE SETUP

BUDGET BACKDROP
Shooting in front of a set of black curtains is a simple way to create a studio-style background on a tight budget

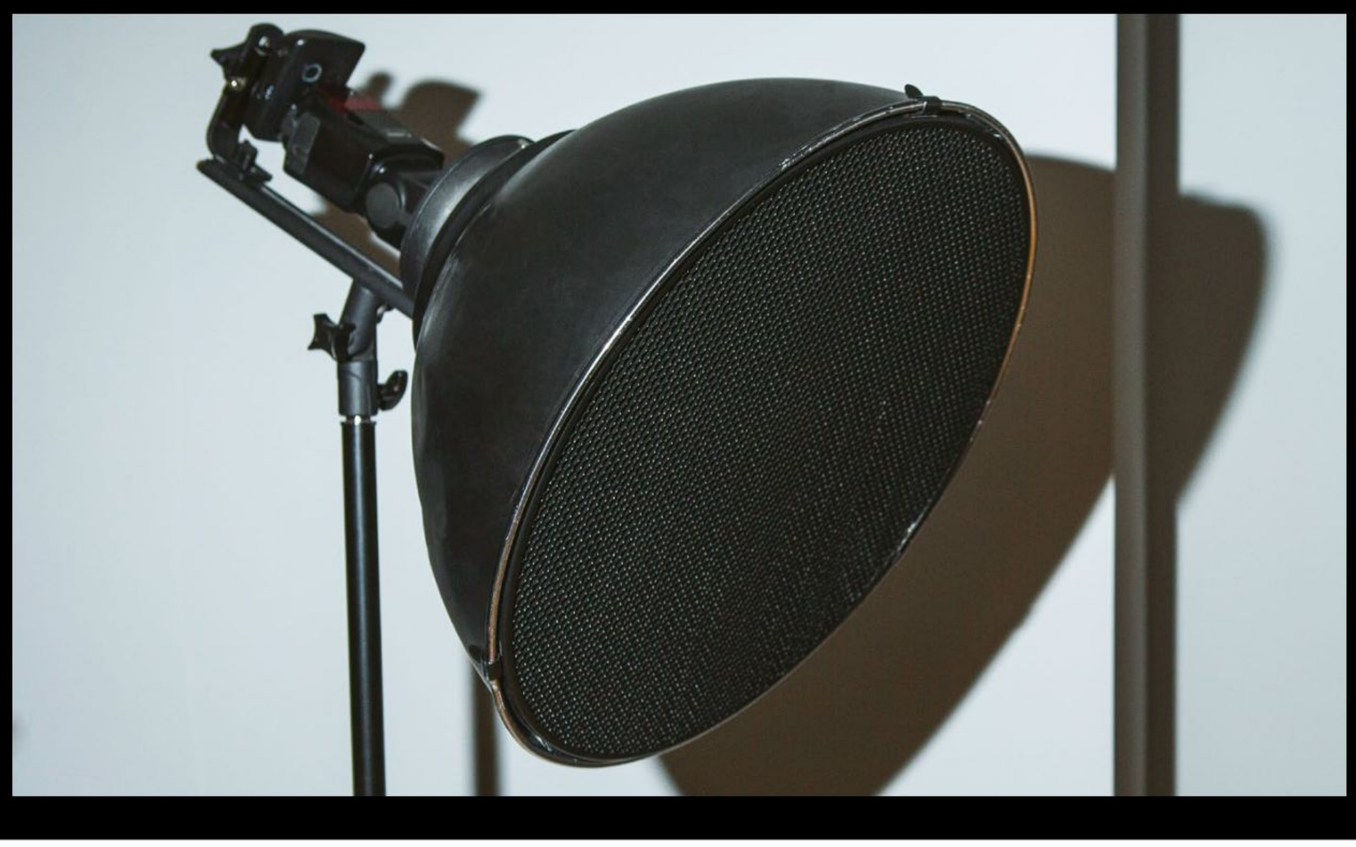
RIM LIGHTING
Positioning a second to the side and slightly behind your subject will create a rim lighting effect that will help them standout against the dark background

PROPS
Giving your model props to interact with will allow them get in to character more easily for better results

LIGHT MODIFIERS

Improve the quality of light by using a handy diffuser

Firing a flashgun or studio strobe without a light modifier can often produce harsh, unflattering results and will cast strong shadows across the face. To remedy this, professional photographers attach light modifiers to the front of their studio lights in order to diffuse the light to produce softer results. There are a multitude of different diffusers available, but the most common choices are softboxes, beauty dishes and photographic umbrellas. Although all modifiers work in a similar way, they will produce varying results depending on their size and shape. If you wish to use a light modifier with off-camera flash, you'll also need to purchase a suitable light bracket.



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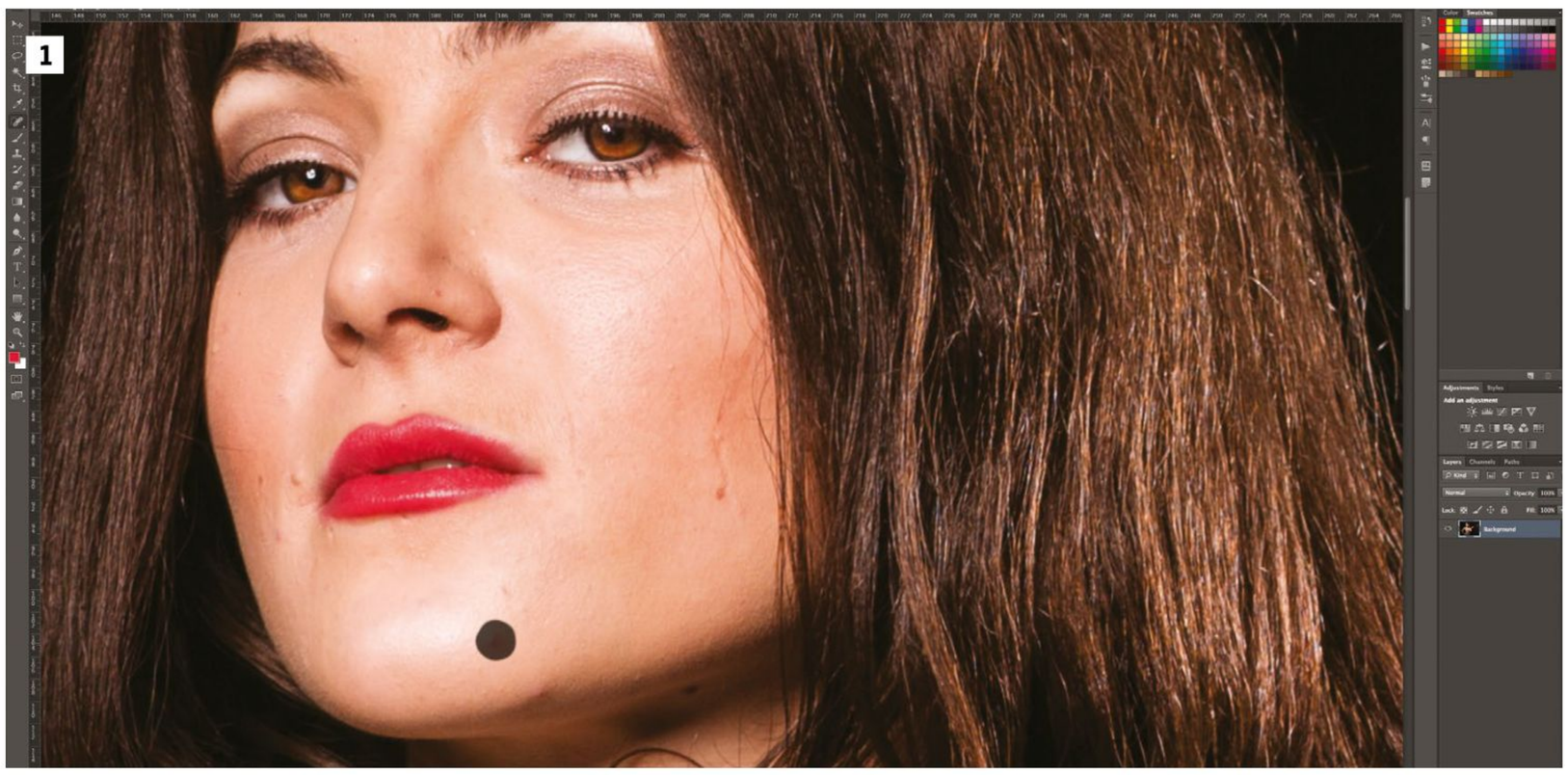
EDITING STEPS

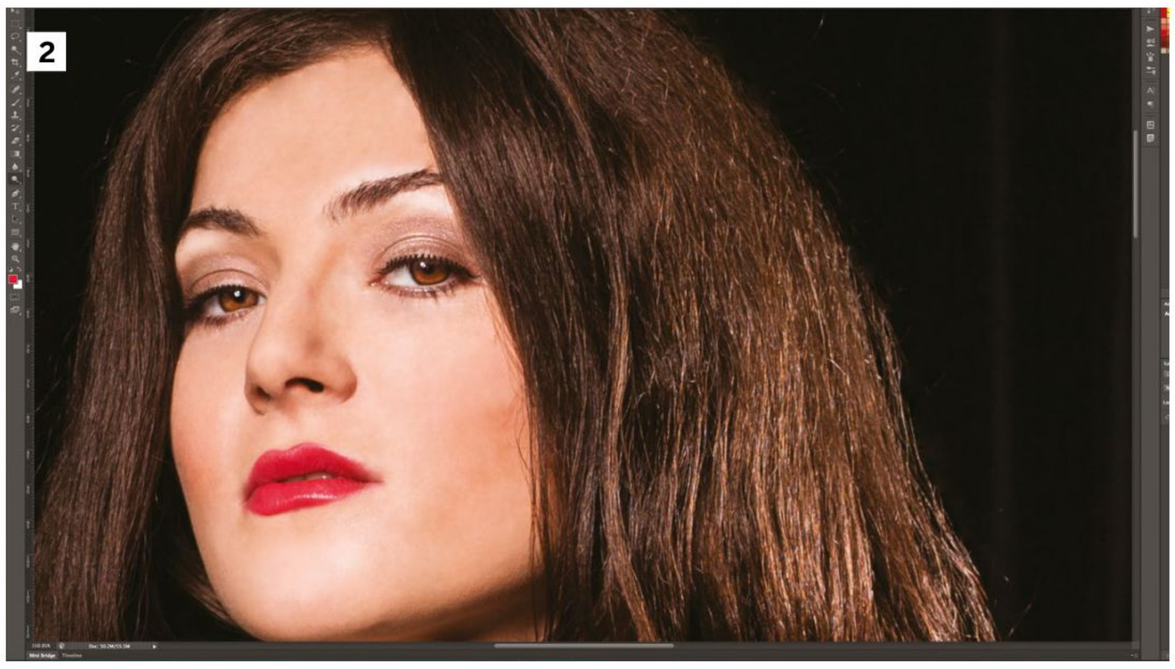
1 Remove blemishes With your image opened up in Photoshop, start off by grabbing the Spot Healing brush from the toolbox and carefully brush over any spots or blemishes on the model's skin.

2 Dodge the eyes Choose the Dodge tool from the toolbox and set the Range to Highlights and the Exposure to around 5%. Now, brush around the pupils of the eyes to brighten them.

3 Sharpen the shot Head up to Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask. In the window that appears, set the Amount to 50%, the Radius to 2px and the Threshold to 0 Levels. Click OK to confirm the changes.

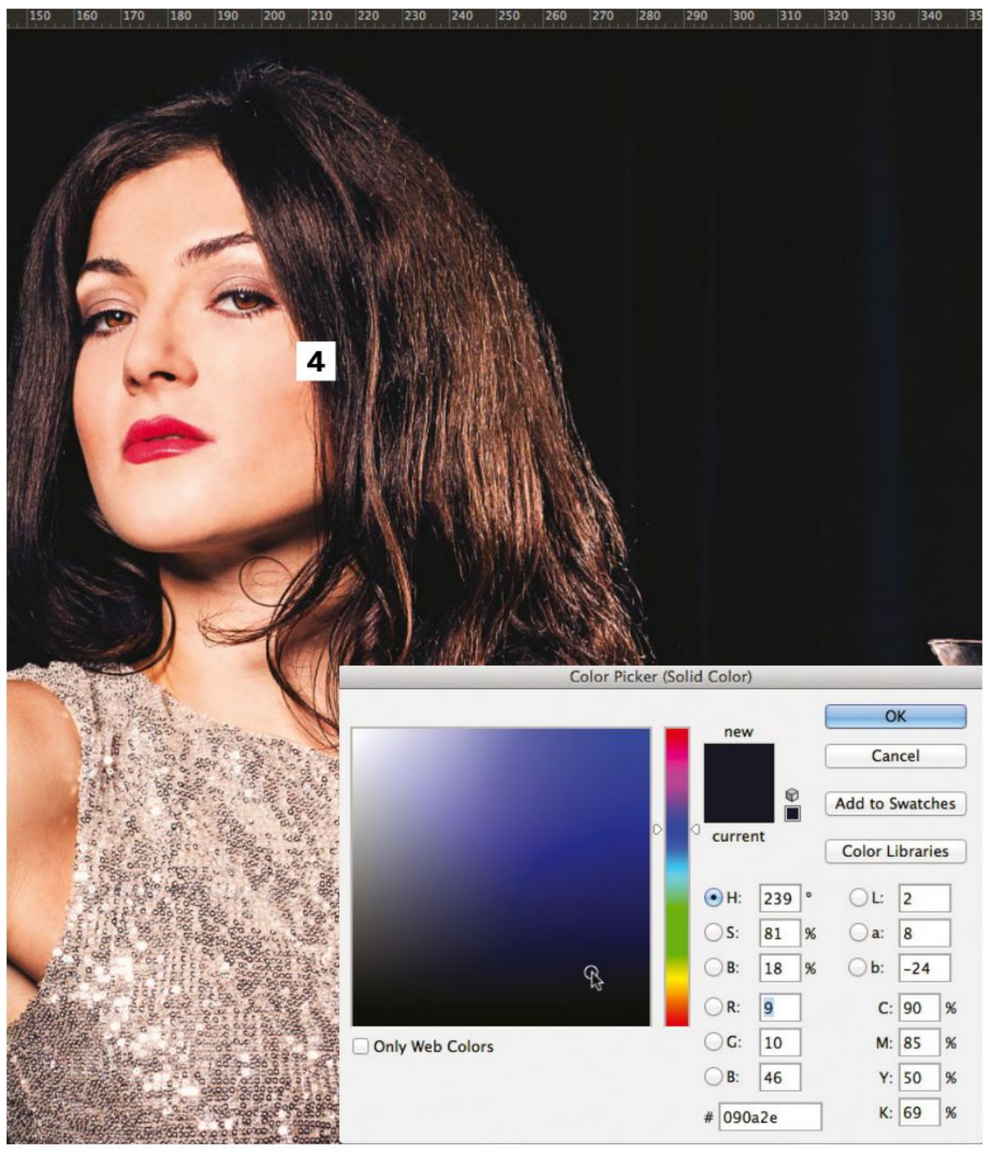
4 Add a vintage colour effect Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Solid Colour and pick a dark blue colour. Change the layer's blending mode from Normal to Exclusion, before reducing the Opacity to around 50%.





Below
Enhance with Photoshop
Using Photoshop we're able to quickly remove blemishes, enhance details and finish with an attractive colour effect to make our final image much more appealing





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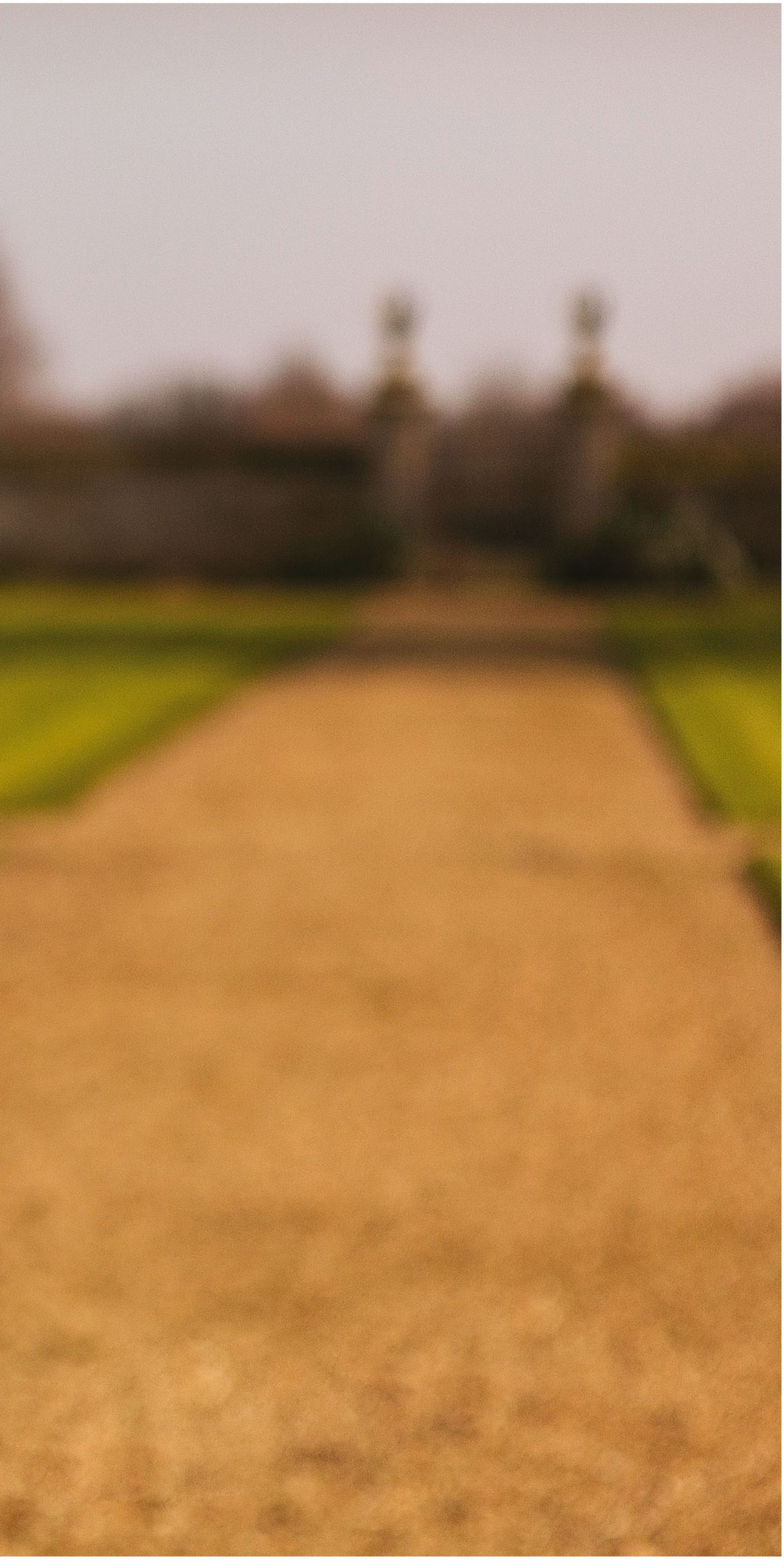
USE FLASH FOR MODERN PORTRAITS



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USE ND FILTERS FOR FLASH

Create professional shallow depth-of-field effects, even in bright ambient light

Professional portrait photographers generally favour underexposing the ambient light by two stops or more whenever they are using off-camera flash for outdoor portraits.

However, this makes it very difficult to simultaneously achieve shallow depth of field, which is also often preferred. Underexposing the ambient light requires apertures of around f11 or smaller, so the background behind your model will be in reasonably clear focus.

Though ND filters are often associated more closely with landscape photography, professional portrait photographers and videographers often make use of them to enable wider apertures to be employed when the ambient light is bright.

The only thing you need to keep in mind is that the ND filter will also limit the effective power output of the speedlight, so you'll need to set it to a higher value and this will in turn cause the recycling time to increase. Fresh batteries will help with this, however.

If you'd like to apply this technique to your own photography, keep reading as we reveal the steps involved in the next few pages.

Left

Dramatic flash effects

Combining off-camera flash with a neutral density filter allows you to create images where the ambient light appears to be darker than the subject, even on a bright, sunny day

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- DSLR
- ND filter
- Speedlight
- Wireless triggers
- Light stand
- Light modifier

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SHOOTING STEPS

1 Switch to full manual mode With your camera activated, start off by turning the Mode Dial to 'M' to activate the full manual shooting mode. Next, set the shutter speed to 1/100sec, the ISO to the lowest value (usually 100) and finally dial in the widest possible apeture value – for our lens, this was f2.8.

2 Setup your flashgun You'll want to use your speedlight in its Manual mode, usually inidicated with an 'M'. There's a good chance you'll end up on full power (1/1) in order to correctly expose your model, but start on half power (1/2) to see if that's suffificient.

3 Attach the triggers To shoot wirelessly, you'll need a radio trigger unit for both the speedlight and the camera's hotshoe. You must ensure that both devices are set to the same group and frequency values or the system won't work. Take a test shot to check that everything fires correctly.

4 Set-up and position the flash Secure the flashgun to the bracket on the lightstand. If you're using a modifier, attach this now. Having the speedlight near your subject makes it more efficient in terms of power and makes the light softer, but don't get it too close or it may be visible in your images.

5 Pre-focus the portrait If you are using a stronger ND filter, composition and focusing may be difficult to do once it's been attached. If so, frame the portrait and focus on your subject's face beforehand. Be careful not to move position, switch the lens over to MF and then attach the ND filter.

6 Take some shots Review your initial results using the LCD screen on the back of the camera. If they're too dark, either move the flash closer to your model or increase the power of the flash. Another option is to increase the ISO sensitivity to 200 or higher. Carefully review the focus, too.

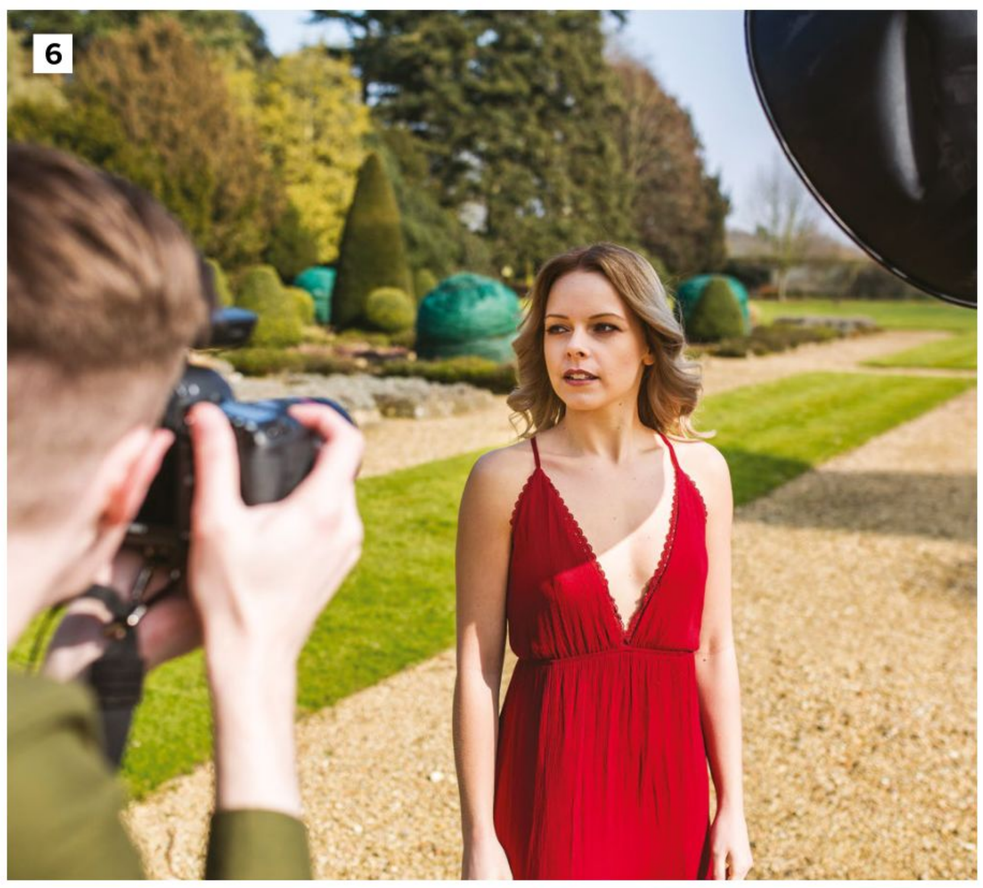












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THE SETUP

OFF-CAMERA FLASH
In order to light our model, we fired a flashgun off-camera using a set of wireless radio triggers

SHOOT LONG
To ensure the background was thrown out of focus and into an attractive blur, we shot with a 70mm lens set to f2.8

NOTE THE SUN'S POSITION
Shooting directly into the Sun is likely to prove challenging from a flare and exposure point of view, while if it's behind you the model will be squinting. Having the Sun slightly to either side of you is ideal

USE A MODIFIER

For that professional studio-style lighting, a light modifier is essential

If you're serious about achieving pro-quality lighting effects then investing in a light modifier for your off-camera flash setup is an absolute must. A light modifier allows you to soften the light generated by the flash and create a much more pleasing light with less harsh shadows.

Modifiers come in a host of shapes and sizes, including photographic umbrellas, softboxes and beauty dishes. For this tutorial, we opted for a beauty dish as it's perfectly designed for portrait headshots and is a great way of creating a softer, directional light. It's worth bearing in mind that in order to start shooting with a light modifier you may need to invest in a flash bracket that offers support for the attachment of a light modifier.



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EDITING STEPS

1 Remove blemishes With your image opened in Photoshop, grab the Spot Healing Brush tool from the toolbox and with a soft-edged brush carefully brush over any spots or blemishes on the model's skin to swiftly remove them.

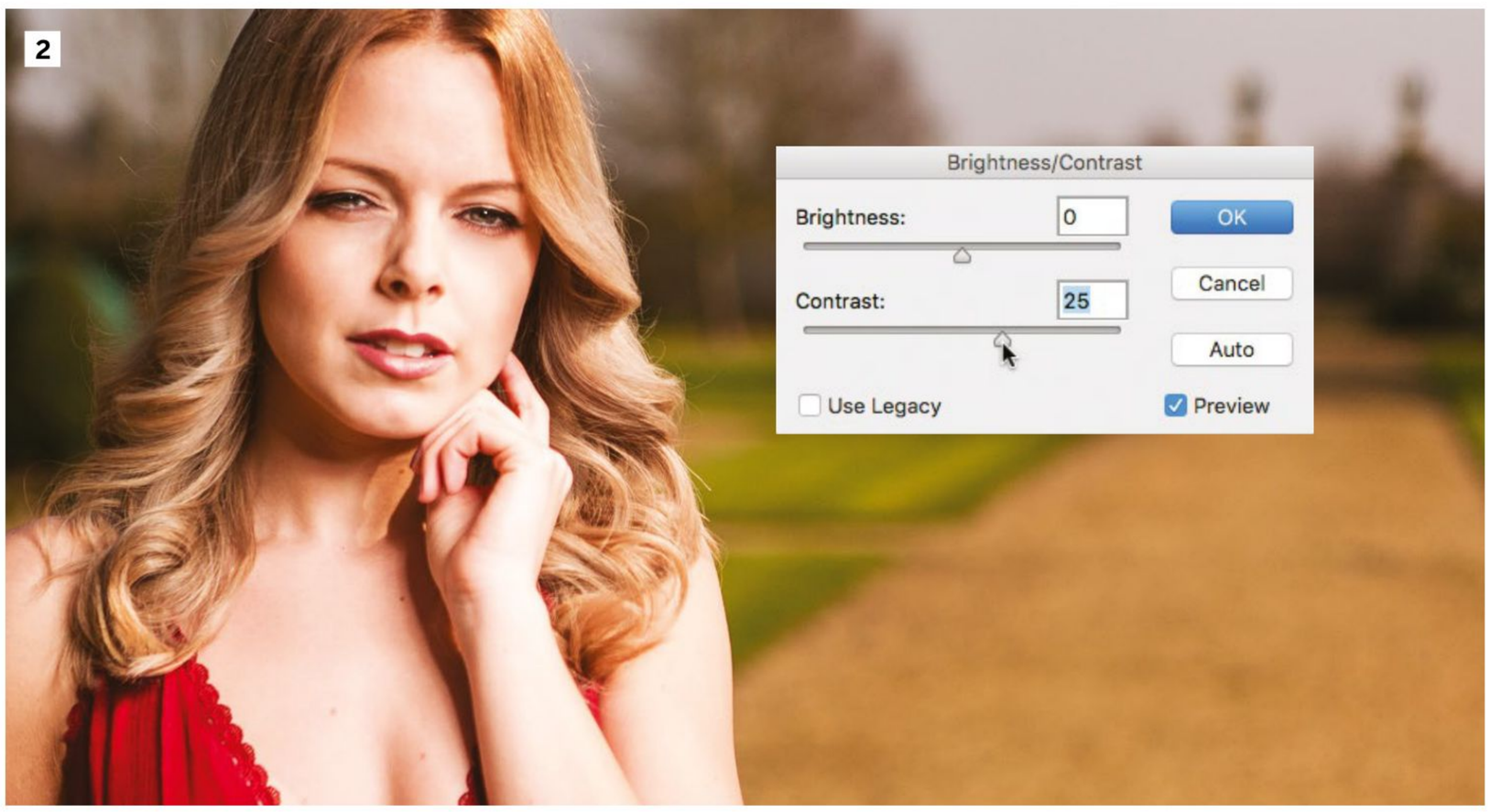
2 Boost the contrast Head up to Image>Adjustments> Brightness/Contrast and in the window that appears, increase the Contrast slider to a value of around 25 to give it a boost. Click OK to confirm the changes.

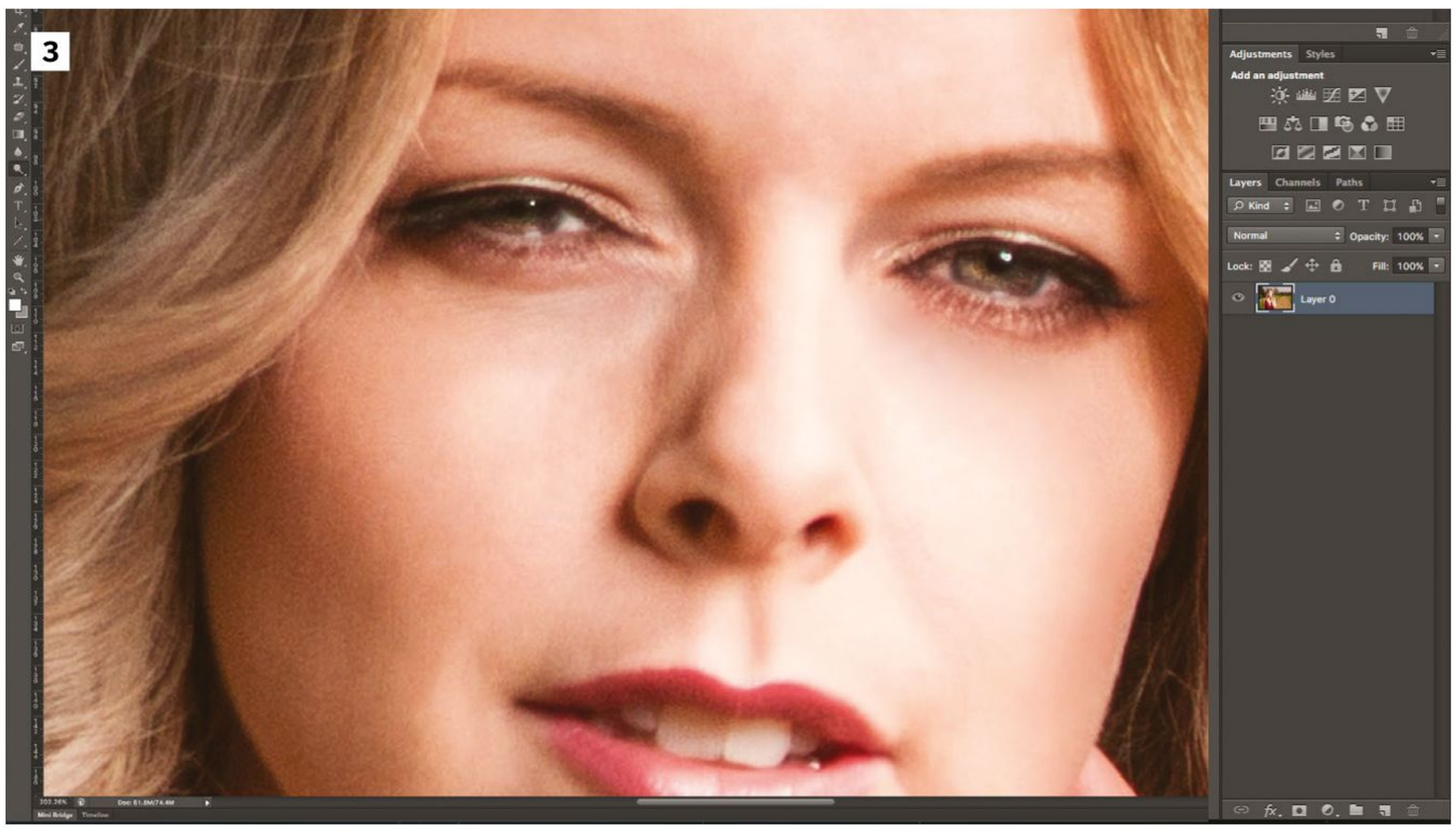
3 Brighten the eyes Grab the Dodge tool from the toolbox, then at the top of the screen set the Range to Highlights and the Exposure to around 5%. Now, gently brush over the model's eyes to brighten them.

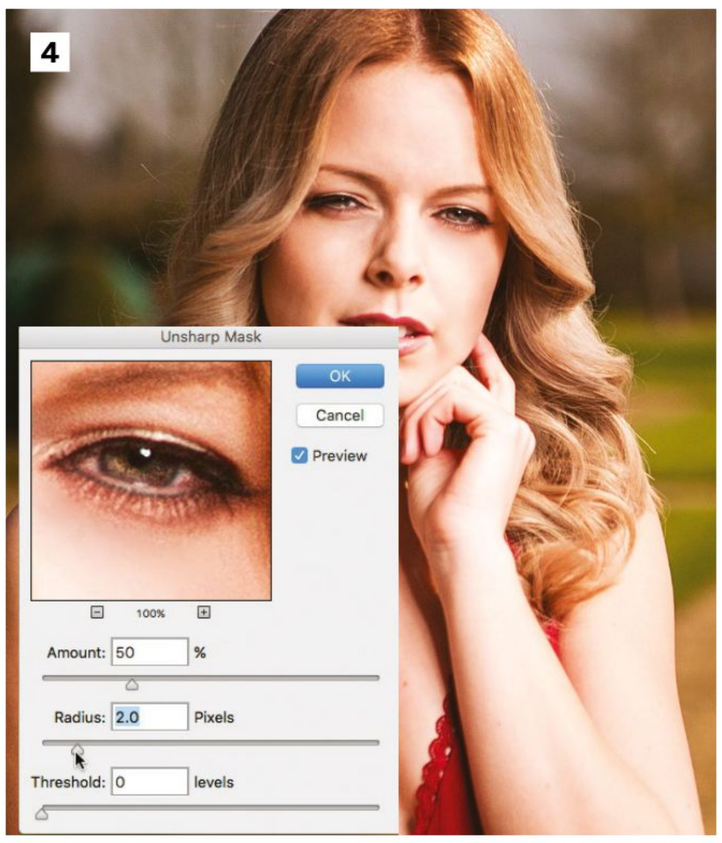
4 Sharpen and finish Go up to Filter > Sharpen > Unsharp Mask. In the window, start off by setting the Amount to 50%, followed by the Radius to 2.0 pixel. Leave the Threshold at 0 Levels, but adjust this to suit the image.

Below
The final portrait
After a few simple adjustments in Photoshop, our image has been successfully cleaned up, sharpened and is now bursting with colour and contrast









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USE ND FILTERS FOR FLASH





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CAPTURE PORTRAITS WITH PRISMS

Discover how to enhance your portraits with these simple accessories

In this tutorial you will discover how to create gorgeous in-camera flare effects that can add a lot of depth to a simple portrait image. Aside from your regular camera kit, you will need a glass prism, which can be found on any number of online retail sites. These prisms are generally used for school science experiments, so they're readily available and very inexpensive. They are very easy to use out on location, too; you simply hold them in front of the lens and shoot away. If you're looking to use them in a studio environment, there are a few key things to bear in mind in order to maximise the flare effect that creates the captivating signature look. In this tutorial we'll be keeping it simple with just two lights and a backdrop: one light to illuminate the model and one light to shine into the prism to create the effect. Even the backdrop used here is a simple window blind, so it's a very cost-effective setup. The examples here were captured in a front room, so it doesn't require much space.

Right
Create it in-camera
With this technique stunning, dreamy flare effects can be created in-camera rather than by using the somewhat less authentic flare filters found in editing software

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Prism
- Camera
- 2 light stands
- 2 speedlights
- Key light modifier: beauty dish/softbox
- Simple reflector dish modifier
- Backdrop



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SHOOTING STEPS

1 Prepare your camera A wider aperture, around f2.8 to f5.6, will yield the best results. Manual mode is recommended if you're in a studio. Set the ISO to 100 and your shutter speed to 1/160, as this will be fast enough to limit ambient light but still sync to the flash.

2 Set up your key light Position your key light above the model's head, angled down and about two to three feet away. Your subject should be about halfway from the background to the key light – by doing this the key light should now illuminate the model and also spill onto the backdrop.

3 Select the key light modifier A 22-inch white beauty dish was used here but a small 60cm softbox or umbrella would do equally well. Using any of these modifiers will give you a softer, more flattering light on the subject's skin. The larger the light source, the softer and more flattering the light will be.

4 Set up your backdrop In a studio environment the prism will distort your field of view, so make sure that you have a backdrop large enough to accommodate for this effect. The image here was captured in a front room with simply a window blind as a backdrop. An inexpensive setup can still work wonders.

5 Position the flare light This was simply an open reflector dish. It doubled up as our hair light, generating flare in the prism. Place it behind the model and off to the side just out of shot. Setting the light one stop brighter than your key light will ensure a strong flaring effect through the prism into the camera lens.

6 Hold the prism Now the fun part begins. Simply shoot away while holding the prism in front of your lens at different angles. Try it with the prism held horizontally above the lens or to the side and don't forget to try twisting it to produce different looks. Always keep the prism quite close to the lens.













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THE SETUP

BACKDROP
This is a very inexpensive silver window blind. We shot at a wider aperture so this wasn't in focus

FLARE LIGHT
This will be the light positioned just over the model's shoulder and pointing towards the lens and the hand-held prism

KEY LIGHT
A beauty dish has been used here, but you can substitute this for a softbox or umbrella, but make sure you position it above the model's head and about two to three feet away

MODEL
Position the model a couple of feet away from the backdrop. Get them correctly placed and the key light will fall off nicely onto both the model and the backdrop, simultaneously lighting them both

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

There are plenty of other items available that you can experiment with

You needn't stop with just the prism in front of the lens; you can try any number of glass objects to produce some stunning results.

Try simple wine glasses and other glassware, or even crystals if you have any lying around. Crystals give a slightly more distorted look compared to the prism, but simply holding a crystal or several directly in front of your lens can create some gorgeous colours. Try and get your hands on some antique crystals – these slightly older crystals were coated in a very thin film of lead, which gives them those gorgeous rainbow colours as you look through them. You can get away with shining lights directly into them to get some great bokeh effects too. You can even try something as low-tech as a piece of bubble wrap.

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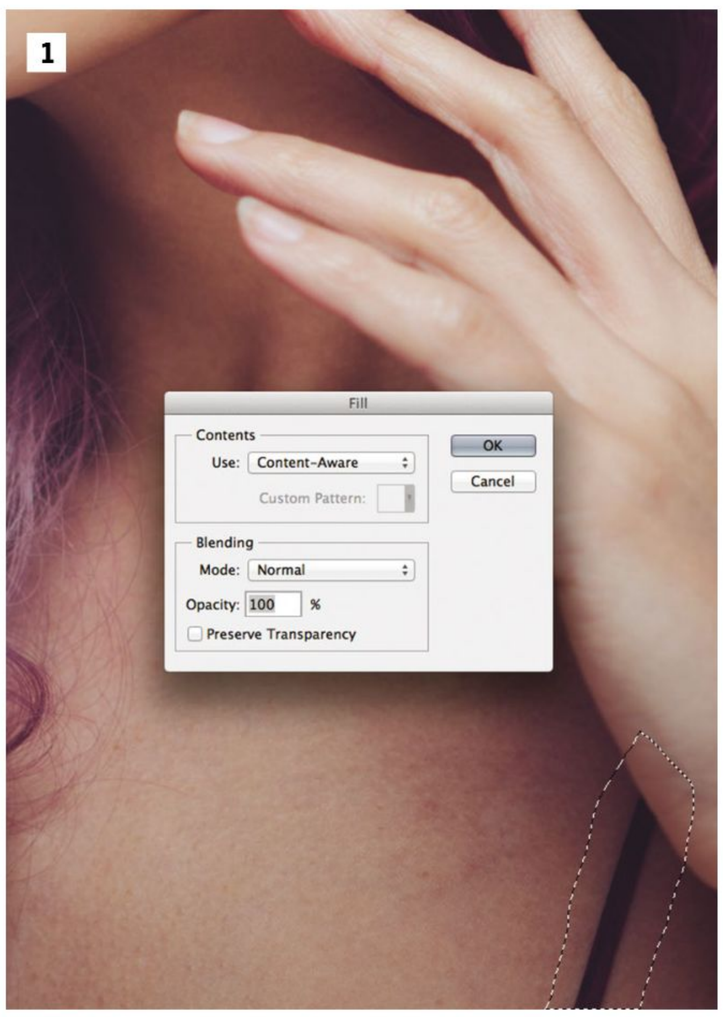
EDITING STEPS

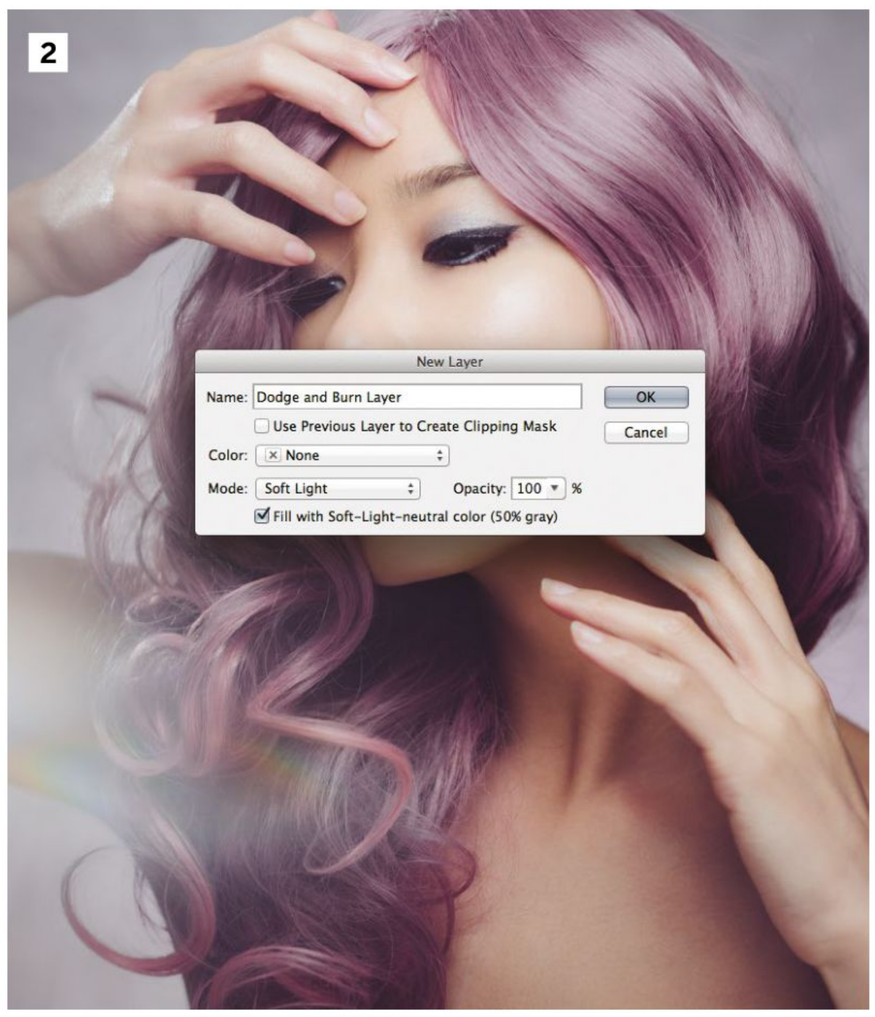
1 Clean up Remove any blemishes, stray hairs and, in this instance, straps that don't add anything to the image. Simply highlight the area, hit Shift+Delete, select Content-Aware and click OK.

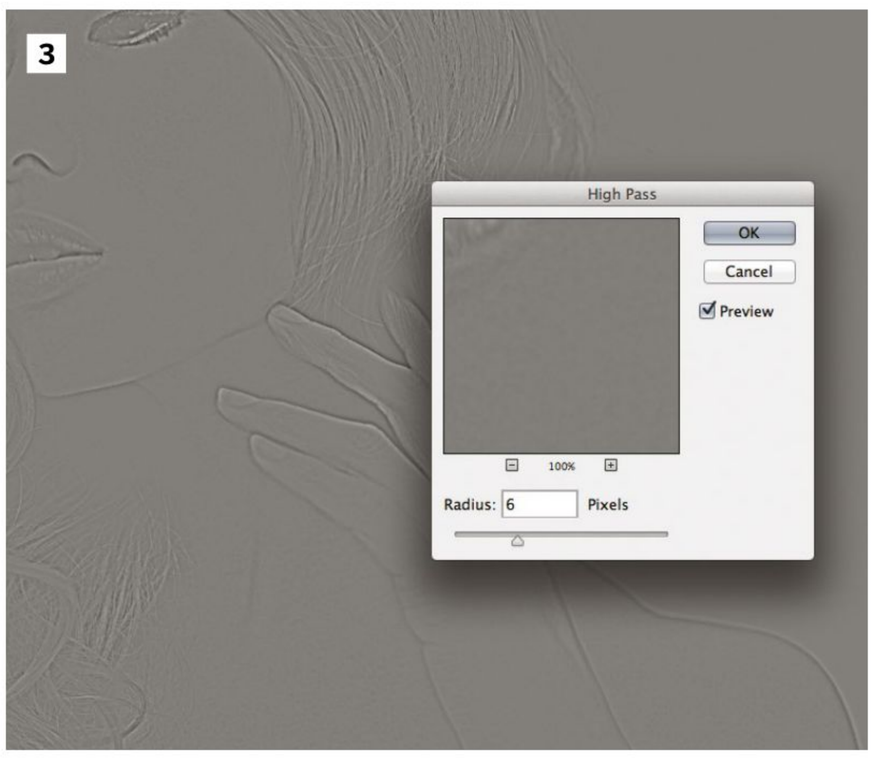
2 Add depth Head to Layer>New >Layer..., and in the layer properties box choose Soft Light in the Mode drop-down menu. Click the tick box that says 'Fill with Soft-Light-neutral color (50% gray)' and hit OK. Now you can paint white and black on this layer to dodge and burn respectively.

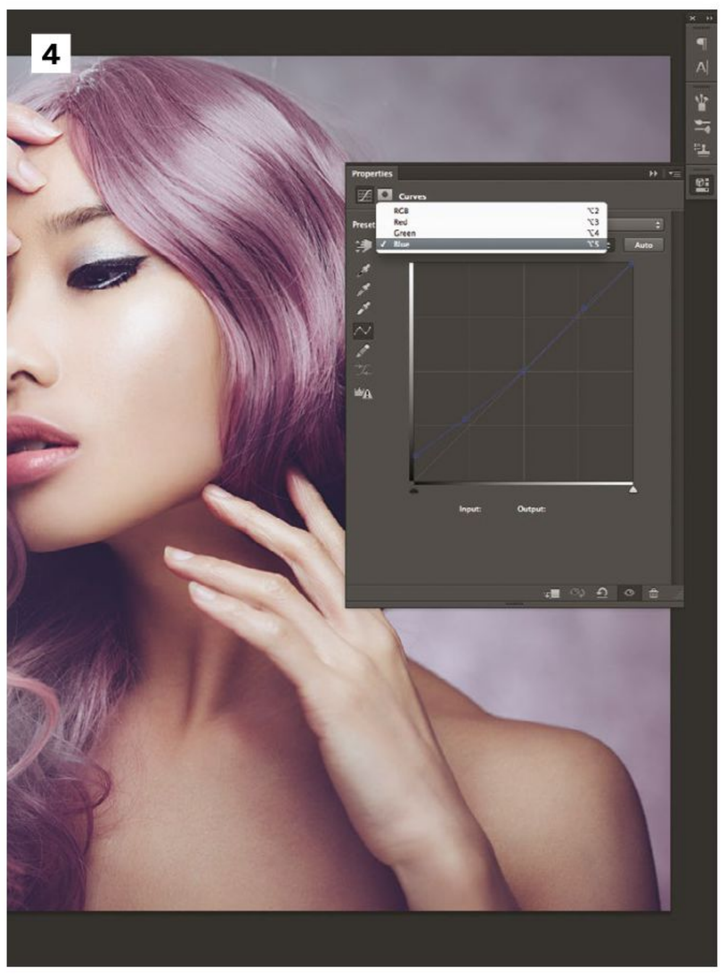
3 Sharpen your image With your top layer selected hit Cmd/Ctrl +Opt/Alt+Shift+E. This will copy every layer below and make a new combined layer on top. Hit Cmd/ Ctrl+Shift+U on this new layer to strip the colour from it, and then head to Filter>Other>High Pass. Choose a pixel radius between five and ten, and then hit OK. Now simply change your layer-blending mode from Normal to Soft Light and adjust the Layer Opacity if you need to.

4 Edit final colour tone Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Curves and hit OK. From here you can go into the RGB drop-down menu at the top of the window and select each of the Red, Green and Blue channels to modify their Curves independently.









Below

Image enhanced with Photoshop

Using simple editing techniques you can remove distractions, add depth with dodging and burning, sharpen your shot and lastly colour tone it for the final look





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SHOOT AND EDIT A CREATIVE PORTRAIT

Learn to produce interesting and attention-grabbing images with a simple studio setup and Photoshop

If it's going to be another day in the studio shooting portrait photography, why not experiment with the appearance of the main subject of your shot – the face itself. In this tutorial, you'll discover how to shoot a female portrait in a studio using two studio lights, while experimenting with washable tempera paint on her face to achieve an interesting visual effect.

The next few pages will cover some basics and important tips on correct positioning of the lights in relation to the face, the choice of lighting accessories and how to treat the studio for any excessive reflections to drastically improve the overall contrast, as well as how to enhance the natural anatomy of the model. This particular image was created with soft light (working with softboxes or similar light-diffusing accessories), because softer shadows and gradients on the face allow the tempera splashes and details to stand out.

After the shooting steps, you'll learn the main stages of the editing process, from preparing your RAW files to using some proven methods and tricks in skin retouching, and lastly some final colour and light corrections.



Left

The face canvas

Some basic and cheap washable tempera was used to create interesting effects on the model's face. For this shot a studio environment with simple accessories is preferable, followed by detailed and careful retouching

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- DSLR
- Telephoto lens (135-200mm range)
- Two studio flashlights
- Softbox (1x1m approx)
- Beauty dish (500mm approx)
- Light reflector
- Black background
- Washable tempera paint
- Toothbrushes
- Adobe Photoshop

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SHOOTING STEPS

1 Use soft studio lighting The main light here is the 50cm beauty dish, with an additional 1x1m softbox as the fill light so the shadows aren't completely dark. Positioning the main light height-wise is most important – too low and the anatomy of the face will look flat, too high will leave the eyes in the dark.

2 Isolate the scene from reflections Keep in mind that the light emitted from the flashes is not the only one that lands on your model's face – there will be reflections from all of the surrounding walls and the floor. Isolate your model with some simple black cloth or panels.

3 Use a telephoto lens Everyone knows what happens when you take a portrait with a fisheye lens – this kind of face distortion is also present in 'standard' focal distance lenses (to a lesser degree, of course). To get a natural-looking model, always use higher focal lenses, preferably above 100mm. Even 300mm will work fine!

4 Apply some basic make-up To avoid flat-looking skin with no texture, try applying some basic lubrication (such as dry oil). This will make the texture more pronounced and the skin will better reflect the light. Be careful with skin foundations, because the traces of it are usually visible in high-res photos.

5 Experiment with tempera Before applying the tempera on your model, make sure to try it first on your hand or some paper. You can use a regular toothbrush for this. Experiment with different mixture densities, stroke pressure and so on until you get a splash pattern that you're satisfied with.

6 Choose a shooting position Stand at least two to three metres away from your model, so the face does not look unnatural and distorted. Stick to the same level of eyesight as your model – standing higher will make her look shorter than she actually is.







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4



5



6



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SOFT SHADOWS
This is a personal preference, but for a shot with lots of details on the face, softer shadows will make them more easily distinguishable

LIGHT ISOLATION
Use some basic black cloth to surround your model so that the reflections from the surrounding walls and floor can't reach her face

TELEPHOTO LENSES
For a close-up portrait you should really use a telephoto lens. Standing too close to your model will result in the anatomy of her face looking quite unappealing

THE SETUP

Use the right lens

Not all telephoto lenses are the same, so find what works for you

You might be aware that prime lenses will usually yield sharper looking images than zoom lenses. While this is generally true because of the nature of their mechanical construction, you should really test various lenses and find the one that suits your needs and your budget. The lens used here, Canon's EF 135mm f2.0L USM, is one of the sharpest lenses out there, and this piece of equipment is really crucial to get all those details in the image to stand out so vividly. Retouching skin that was captured with a sharp lens becomes a breeze. Also, if you're shooting a portrait where depth of field is not important, make sure to work with aperture in the 5.6 to 8.0 range, because most of the lenses are sharpest at this point.



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EDITING STEPS

1 Adjust RAW parameters Find a perfect white balance, then slightly lower the highlights and brighten the shadows – you will have more headroom to play with contrast and light in the last stage without clipping the shadows or highlights.

2 Retouch skin After fixing major blemishes using the Healing Brush Tool, make a new layer in Soft Light mode. Take the regular Brush Tool, set to very small opacity, and use black colour to paint over all bright spots, and white colour over the dark spots.

3 Make local colour corrections Fix excessive skin redness with a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer in Hue layer mode – set to Colorize and adjust Hue. Use a mask to limit its effect only on wanted areas.

4 Contour the face Use a larger brush to paint some additional contours and accentuate anatomy. Do this on a new transparent layer in Soft Light mode and use both black and white strokes correspondingly.

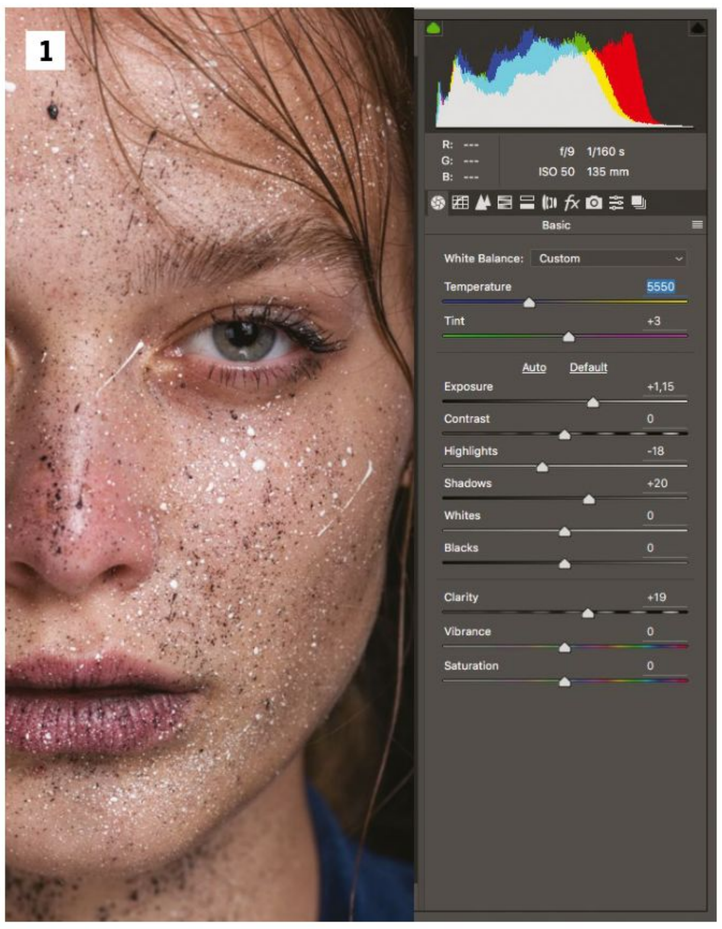
5 Carry out final colour and light corrections Make global corrections with some adjustment layers. You can cleanse the colours with Selective Color, and adjust the light with Levels or Curves. Try having Levels in Luminosity layer mode so that it affects only the light, not the colour.

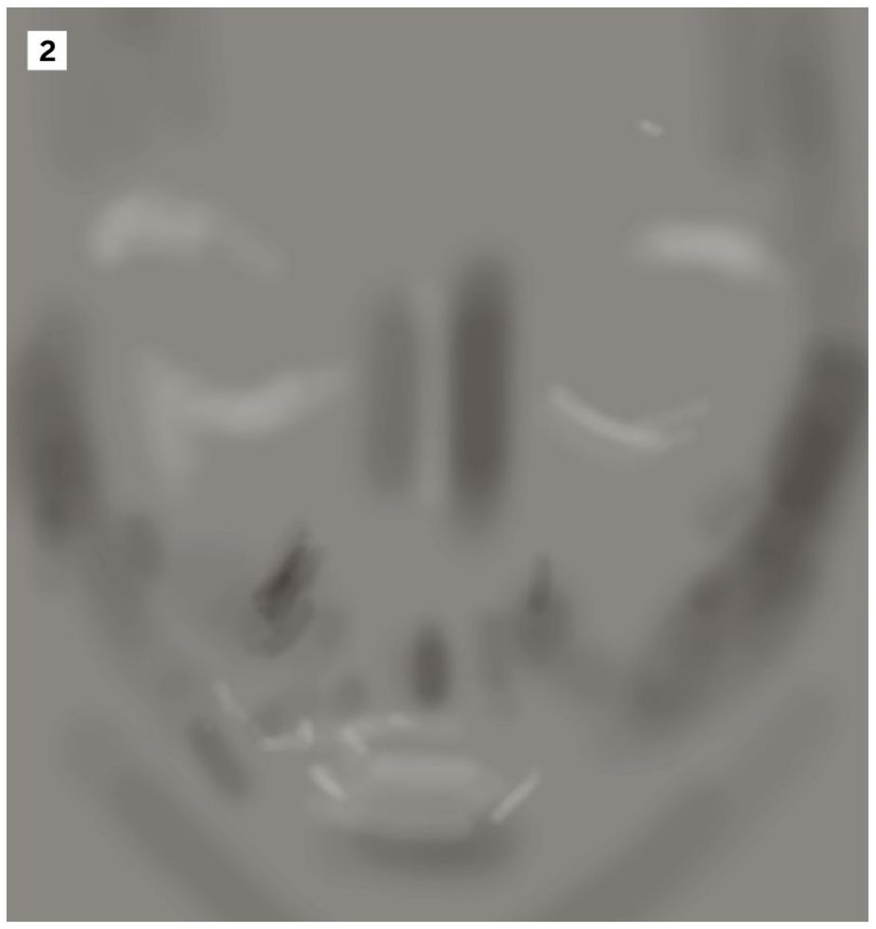
6 Adjust eyes separately Rather than making the eyes brighter solely in Photoshop, try importing another copy of the same RAW file, which is a bit overexposed. Take only the eyes from it, and blend them with the main image.

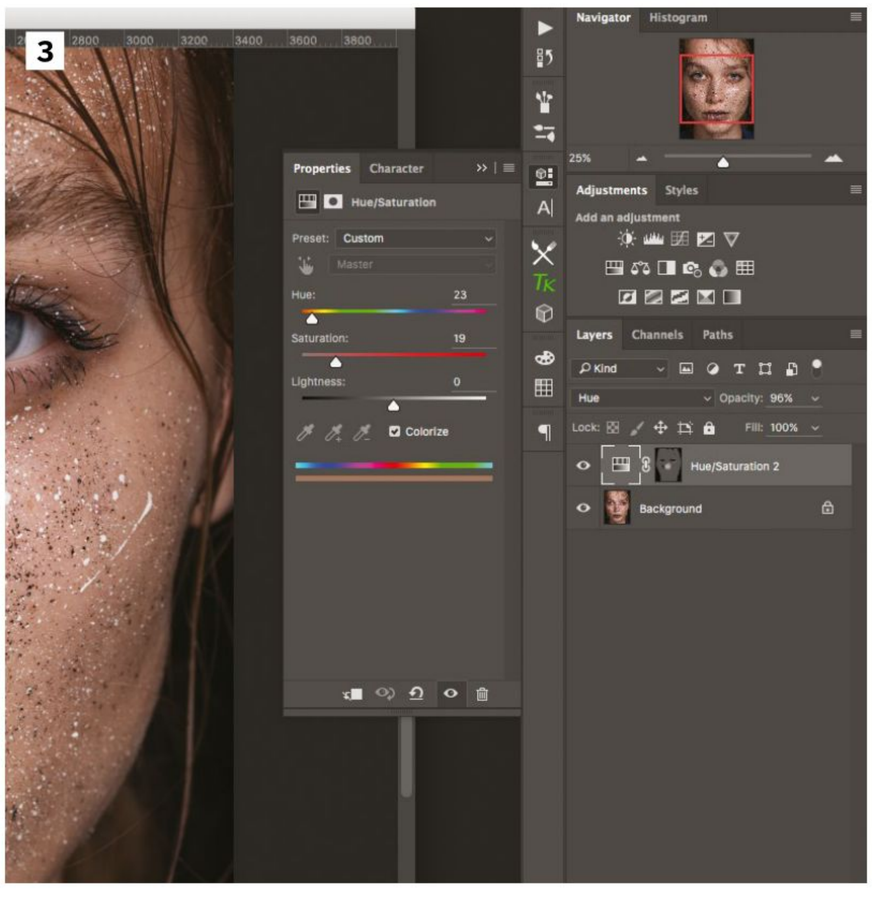
Right

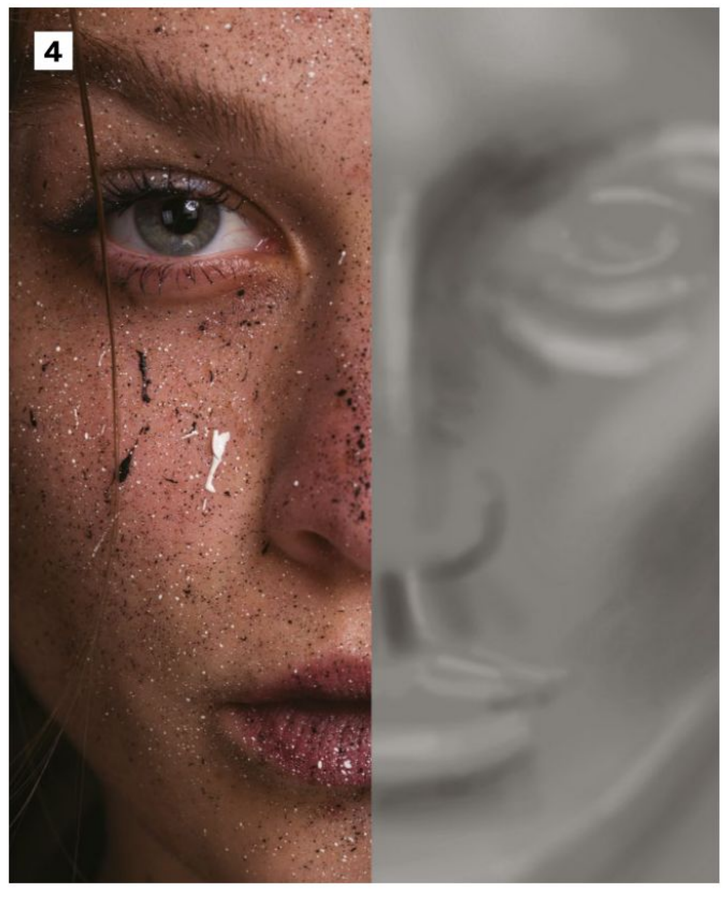
The piercing look

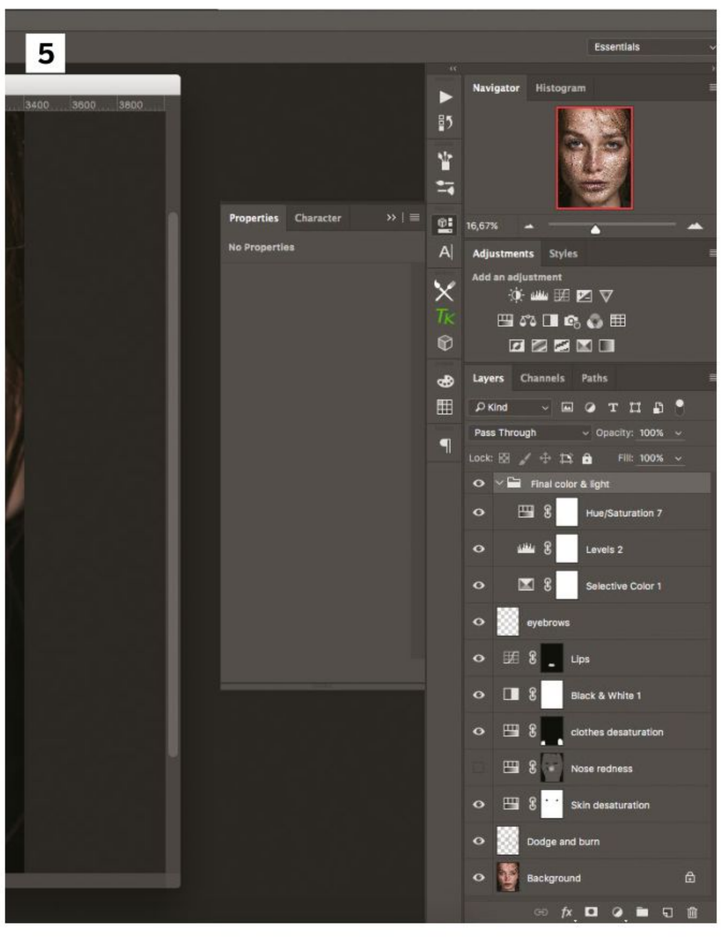
Instead of making the eyes brighter entirely in Photoshop, you can actually make another copy of the RAW file and take only the eyes from it, then work in Photoshop from there

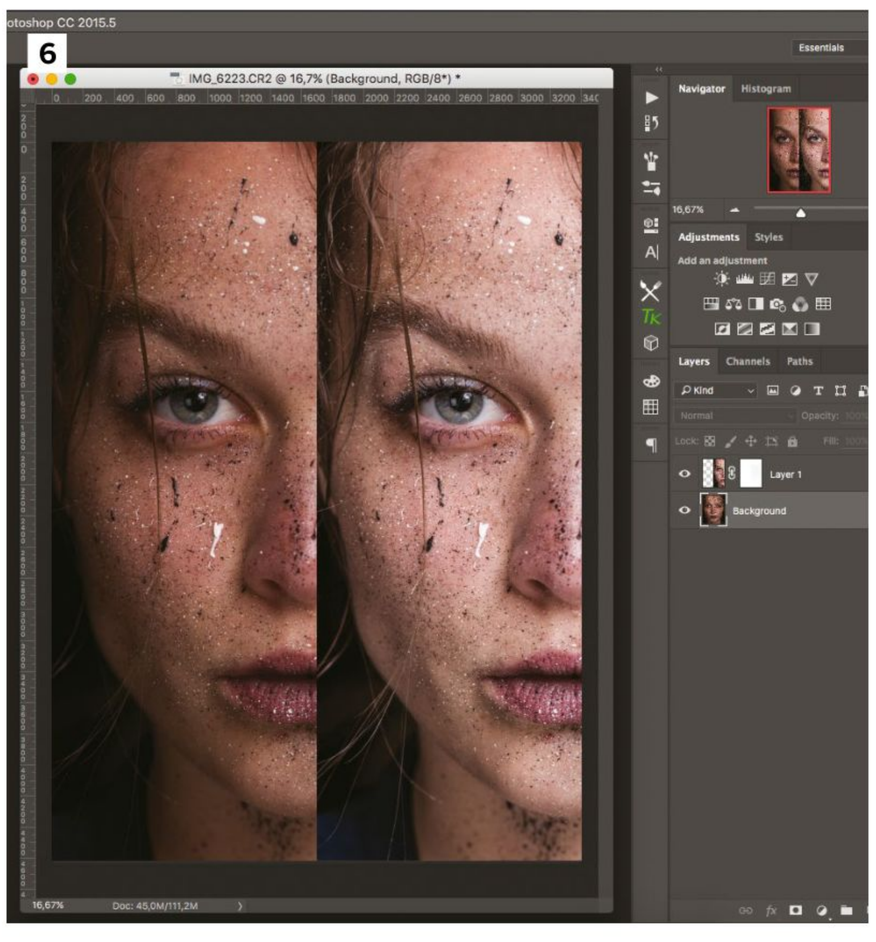












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COMBINE CREATIVE LENSES WITH COLOURED GELS

Learn how to shoot and edit an alluring portrait using this incredible technique with pro photographer Jake Hicks

A scene can be visually confusing if there's multiple colours and objects in focus that are fighting for our attention. This technique uses a single dominant-coloured gel to simplify the scene visual, then draws the attention of the viewer with our Lensbaby lens. One of the key characteristics of this shot is the blurred focus effect. First impressions might tell you that this effect is created in post-production, but in actuality this look is created in-camera with a Lensbaby lens. Lensbaby specialises in making lenses that take photos with very distinctive effects baked into every frame. The lenses produce these results without the need for editing programs and filters and the effects that these lenses can create range from user-defined radial blurs, slices of focus and even swirly backgrounds, all of which are achieved with each and every shutter press. In this setup we'll be using the Lensbaby Sweet 50 in conjunction with coloured gels to grab the attention of our viewers, by leading their gaze exactly where we want it and by creating a uniform and less distracting colour palette with a single coloured gel.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Lensbaby Sweet 50
- Camera
- Light stand
- Floor stand (simply resting the light on the floor will also work)
- 2x flash heads or speedlights
- Key light modifier – beauty dish, softbox or umbrella
- Fill light modifier – I recommend a small softbox
- Backdrop
- Fan (optional)
- Some coloured gels – I used a blue gel here
- Photoshop



Right
Take control
This technique is all about taking control of a scene by removing distracting elements. We will use a coloured gel to simplify the scene's colour palette and a Lensbaby lens to direct our viewer's gaze to where we want it



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THE SETUP

BACKDROP
You can use any backdrop you want, but I opted for a background that would take some of the colour from the coloured gel and that also had some texture to blur with the Lensbaby.

KEYLIGHT
I used a beauty dish here. You can substitute this for a softbox or umbrella but you should position it above the model's head, about two to three feet away and off to one side.

MODEL
Position your model about three feet away from the backdrop. Not so close that the key light will cast a shadow on it, and not so far away that no light from the coloured fill light will hit it.

FILL LIGHT
I recommend a small softbox here. Mine was placed on the opposite side to the model as the key light.

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SHOOT THE SHOT

1 Prepare camera We will be shooting with flash so I recommend you set your camera to Manual. Next we'll set our shutter speed to 1/125th and ISO to 100, or as low as your camera will go. If you can adjust the White Balance then set it to the flash setting.

2 Set up your lens As we're using a manual-focus lens we have to adjust the aperture on the lens itself. I went with f4 for the best balance of depth of field versus lens blur. I'm using the Sweet 50 Lensbaby lens so I'm going to position it at the angle you see in the image.

3 Position key light modifier I used a 22-inch white beauty dish with a diffusion sock. I positioned it off to camera right, about arm's reach away from the model and just above her head, angled down at about 45 degrees.

4 Set up fill light I used a 60cm x 60cm softbox placed on the opposite side of the model as the key light, so off to camera left. This will allow the fill light to colour the shadows created by the key light.

5 Gel your fill light You don't need huge sheets of gels to cover your entire softbox. As long as the flash tube is covered then your light will be gelled. I simply tore open the softbox's front diffusion panel to expose the flash tube and taped a gel on the inside.

6 Assemble background I've chosen a mottled backdrop, as I want some visible texture when I implement the blur. I also want my background to be light enough to take some of the blue gelled light.













LENSBABY LENSES Each lens has a unique look, so be sure to select one that matches your style

Every Lensbaby product creates its own look and effect, so figuring out which one is best for you is half the fun. The Sweet 50 lens creates the user-defined spot of radial blur, the Edge 80 produces a slice of blur that can be orientated however you wish and the Twist 60 leaves a swirl pattern in the background of your shots. Other Lensbaby lenses create more subtle effects like both the Velvet 56 and Velvet 85; these are favoured for their more vintage-style image effects.







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EDIT THE SHOT

1 The clean up The first step is to clean up any distracting elements. Remove blemishes or anything else that looks out of place. I like to create a new duplicate layer and rename it 'Skin' to work on. Go to Layer>Duplicate Layer.

2 Add depth Click Layer>New>Layer. Select Soft Light in the Mode menu and tick the box that says 'Fill with Soft-Light-neutral color (50% gray)'. Hit OK. Now you can paint white and black on this layer to dodge and burn.

3 Sharpen image Select the top layer and press Cmd+Alt+Shift+E. Hit Cmd+Shift+U on the new layer to strip the colour and go to Filter>Other>High Pass. Choose a pixel radius between 5 and 10 and hit OK. Now change the blend mode to Soft Light and adjust opacity.

4 Edit final colour tone Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Curves. Hit OK. In the top dropdown you can select the Red, Green and Blue channels to modify their curves.

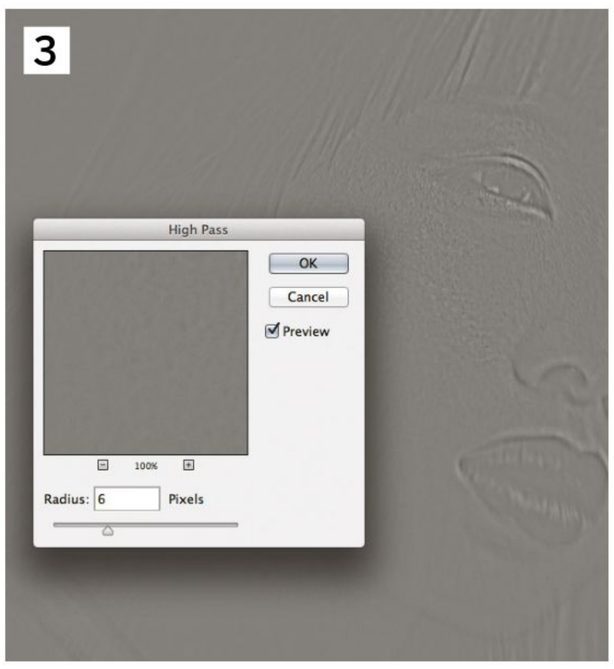
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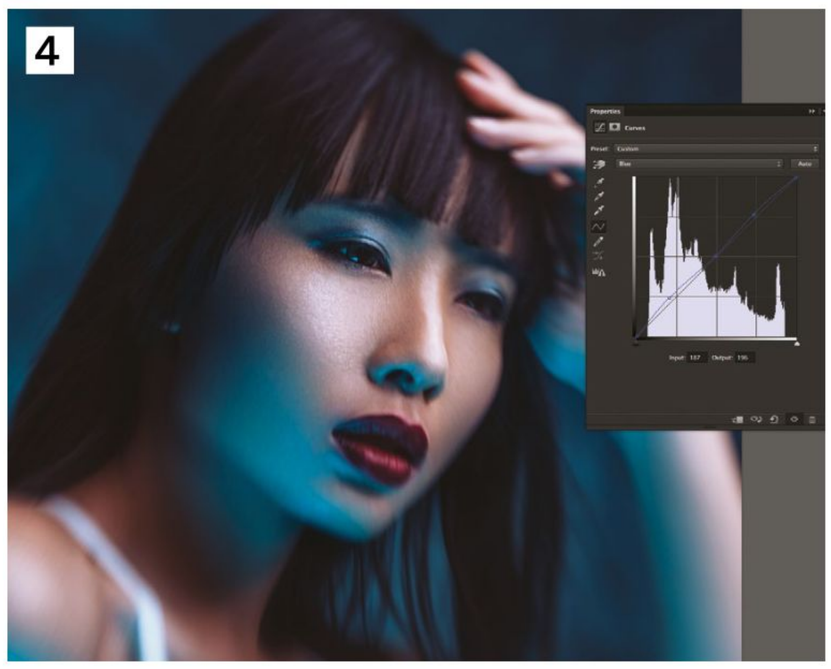
Image enhanced with Photoshop

The shot only needs a few tweaks in post-production, as when using Lensbaby lenses the image effect is created in-camera









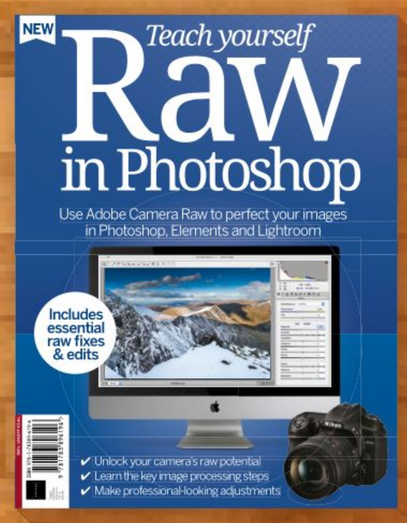


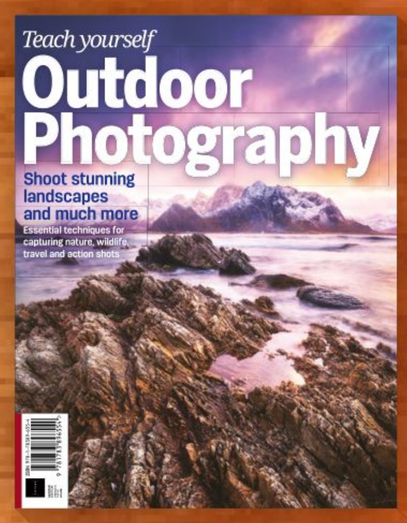

AFTER

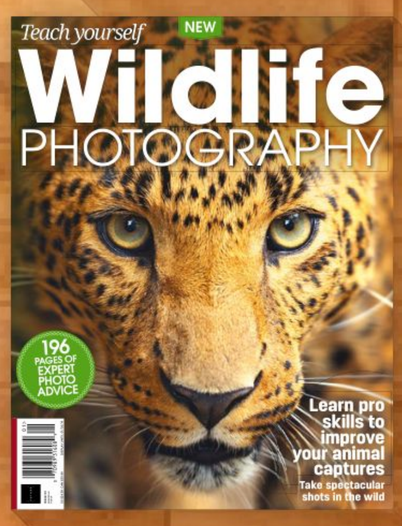
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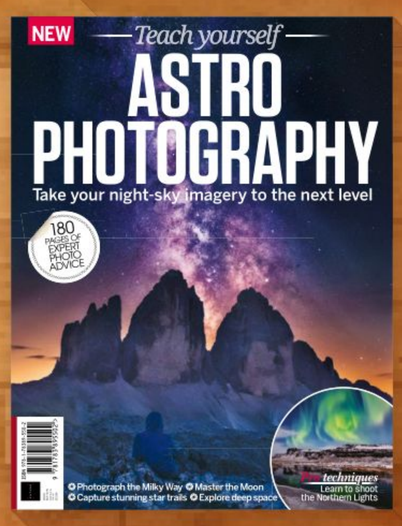




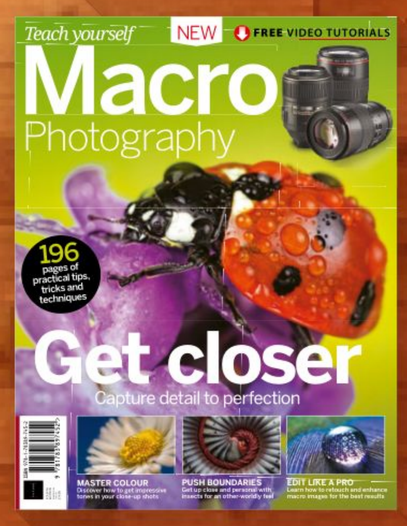












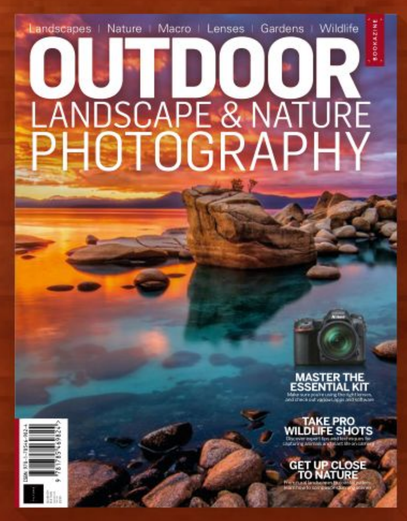
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